Commentary

March 2008

The Election, the GOP—and Iraq

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Beyond the Pale—A Story
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Going Highbrow at the CIA
Terry Teachout

Books in Review
James Nuechterlein • Nathan Thrall • Dan DiSalvo
George Russell • David Pryce-Jones

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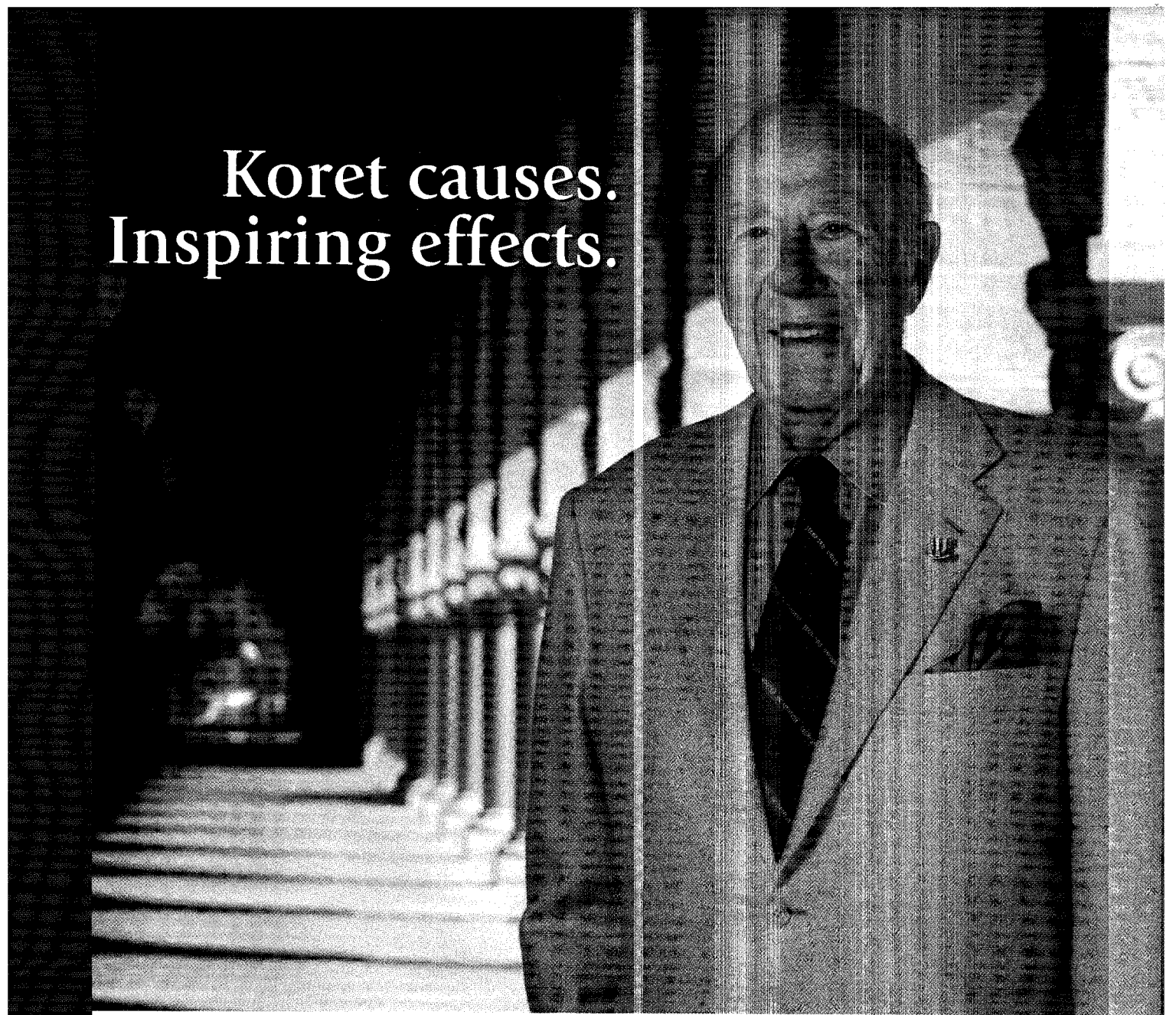

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Commentary
March 2008

Letters from Readers

How're We Doing?

To the Editor:

Peter Wehner and Yuval Levin suggest that a new "morning in America" has dawned ["Crime, Drugs, Welfare—and Other Good News," December 2007]. They correctly point out that by statistical measures, crime, drug use, and educational failure in America have all fallen since the 1990's. This is puzzling, they note, because the "good news" has come despite the fact that the American family continues to deteriorate, as indicated by increases in single parenthood, cohabitation, and illegitimacy in the same period, especially among the poor, the working class, Latinos, and African Americans.

So what gives? Does the family influence the social health of the United States or does it not? The best evidence indicates that children and adults continue to benefit from living in intact, married families. Children who are fortunate enough to grow up with a married mother and father are about half as likely to experience poverty, depression, dropping out of high school, or a teenage pregnancy than their peers from cohabiting, single-parent, or step-families. Likewise, adults who are married tend to be healthier, wealthier, happier, and (in the case of men) better behaved than their unmarried peers. So in all likelihood, American society would be even healthier were it not for the continuing deterioration of the family.

Moreover, the rosy picture that Messrs. Wehner and Levin paint would be somewhat darker if they expanded the scope of their examination to two other important outcomes: inequality and incarceration. Since 1990, the poor and the working class have continued to lose ground against the upper-middle class and the wealthy in terms of wages. With more than 1.5 million Americans currently behind bars, our incarceration rate today stands at a historic high. More than one in ten black men lives behind bars—certainly nothing to celebrate. Indeed, one obvious reason that crime rates in America are falling is that we are throwing so many of our young men into prison. Messrs. Wehner and Levin acknowledge this, but do not dwell upon its implications.

There is strong evidence suggesting that family decline has played an important role in driving up inequality and incarceration in America. A recent study by the sociologist Molly Martin found that family fragmentation accounts for 41 percent of the increase in family-income inequality in recent years. Another study led by Sara McLanahan found that young men who grew up in a single-parent or step-family were twice as likely to end up in prison than those who grew up in an intact family.

Morning in America has not yet arrived, and, in my view, will not arrive until the day when most children—especially children hailing from poor, working-class, and minority communities—are privileged enough to grow up with their married mother and father.

W. Bradford Wilcox
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

To the Editor:

Peter Wehner and Yuval Levin indulge in a bit of wishful thinking about society's capacity for "health" without the aid of the traditional family. Their discussion raises the following question: if rates of measurable sociocultural ills (drug use, crime, abortion) have been falling as the traditional family structure has continued to unravel, is it possible that old arguments

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about the importance of the family are flawed?

But the fact that crime rates are down while illegitimacy is up is irrelevant to the question of whether illegitimacy breeds crime. The only crime data with any bearing on that question concerns how children born out of wedlock fare next to children raised by their own married parents. And in fact, the first group is twice as likely to fall into delinquency than is the second, after controlling for factors like income and education. Similarly, the authors cite data that drug use is down, but ignore the fact that whatever the generalized level of drug abuse in the culture at large, the numbers are much lower for adults and children within married families.

On average, children raised by both of their married parents (as opposed to those raised in single-parent or step-family situations) are more likely to be physically and emotionally healthy, to do better and go further in school, and to earn more money in better jobs; they are less likely to be incarcerated, to be victims of abuse or crime, to have children out of wedlock, to live in poverty, to abuse alcohol or drugs, and to wind up divorced themselves.

TRACEY O'DONNELL
Barcelona, Spain

TO THE EDITOR:

Peter Wehner and Yuval Levin observe that "improvements are visible in the vast majority of social indicators," and conclude that our society has been growing healthier in the last decade and a half. But one may question the reliability of their statistical metrics. As a high-school teacher, I have trouble believing that the rise in test scores reflects anything other than more time spent by schools to prepare for tests (and less time on actual learning). Those who have set foot in a classroom know that practice test drills do not take the place of reading books, even if they are better suited for their narrow objective. And no doubt similar statistical games can be played when it comes to police work, social services, and other realms of government.

MICHAEL MATTAIR
Dallas, Texas

TO THE EDITOR:

Peter Wehner and Yuval Levin note that crime in America has gone down in recent years, and cautiously suggest that though we may not even know it and—with the family still in the doldrums—certainly cannot explain it, our culture may be healthier than it was just a short time ago.

Perhaps they are right. But I wonder if upon closer examination the drop in crime would be seen to be not much more than a lucky accident—that is, not the product of greater social and moral health but of the fact that crime is simply harder to get away with, given modern forensic science and accoutrements like surveillance cameras and cell phones to call police with. If this were the case, the "good news" that Messrs. Wehner and Levin herald is more precisely that social dysfunction exacts a lower price in crime than it once did, just as illegitimate children and disease need no longer be consequences of promiscuous sex.

The reduction in bad social outcomes is certainly to be celebrated. But we should not be lulled into a false sense of our society's health. We have not reached nirvana, as the authors note, and it should not surprise us if our culture of endless self-indulgence eventually comes back to bite us in some other way.

PAUL MCFADDEN
Indianapolis, Indiana

TO THE EDITOR:

Peter Wehner and Yuval Levin report that crime and immorality have been dropping in recent years, and that "we are seeing important progress in critical areas of youth behavior." The reason? "Obviously," they write, "no single explanation will suffice."

I would point to what is perhaps the most significant cultural development in the period they examine (from 1990 to the present): the popularization of personal computers. Testosterone-laden boys no longer have to go out on joyrides to get their kicks; they can play games like Grand Theft Auto. And the camaraderie supplied by a gang can now be supplied on the Internet by sites like Facebook.

BARRY NESTER
Jerusalem, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

One of the main factors in the drop in illegitimacy rates, unmentioned by Peter Wehner and Yuval Levin, is probably technology. The DNA test has closed the responsibility gap. Women and state child-welfare agencies armed with such tests can chase down deadbeat dads, and wage garnishment is a useful contraceptive for the irresponsible.

LAZARO RODRIGUEZ
Dania Beach, Florida

TO THE EDITOR:

I enjoyed Peter Wehner and Yuval Levin's article and agree with many of their observations, but it seems rather circular to note that as people began to be disqualified from welfare rolls there was a "healthy" simultaneous drop—morally speaking—in the number of welfare recipients.

GORDON J. KERR
Macau, China

TO THE EDITOR:

I was surprised that Peter Wehner and Yuval Levin made no mention of the study by John Donohue and Steven Levitt of the link between legalized abortion and reduced crime. Donohue and Levitt point to the fact that males between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four are most likely to commit crimes. They suggest that the decline in unwanted children following the legalization of abortion in 1973 led to a reduction in crime eighteen years later, starting in 1992 and accelerating sharply in 1995. These would have been the peak crime-committing years of the unborn children. Messrs. Wehner and Levin may disagree with the study, but they should have acknowledged it, as its lessons run somewhat counter to their own conclusions.

MICHAEL CAMERON
Christchurch, New Zealand

PETER WEHNER and YUVAL LEVIN write:

W. Bradford Wilcox cites the importance of intact, married families for the well-being of children, and concludes that "in all likelihood, American society would be even healthier were it not for the continu-

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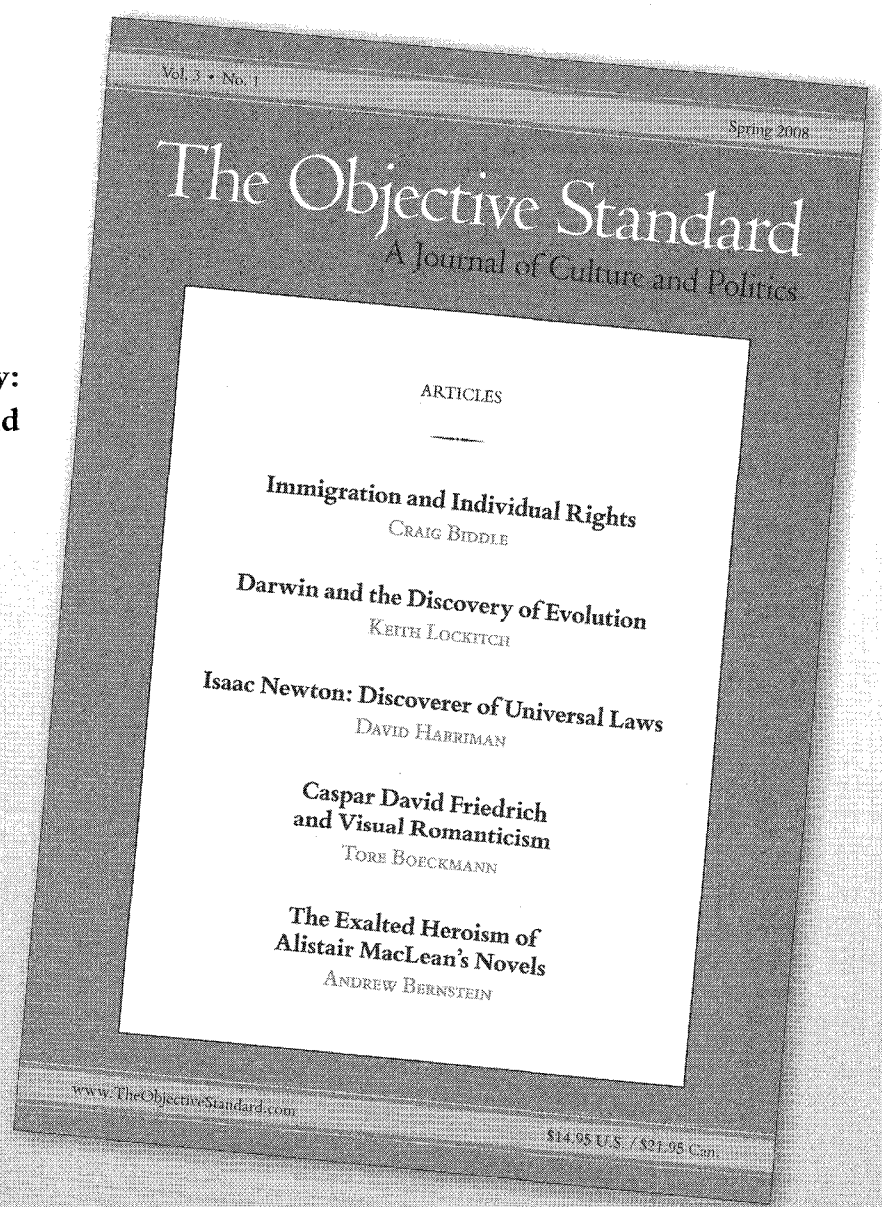

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ing deterioration of the family." Tracey O'Donnell adds that children raised by two married parents do far better in life than those lacking such fortunate circumstances. We wholeheartedly agree. Our point was only to register surprise that the last decade-and-a-half has seen improvement in so many social indicators (crime, drug use, welfare caseloads, teen pregnancies, and others) *despite* the nuclear family's worsening condition.

We also agree that "morning in America" has not yet arrived, and in fact cautioned against such a conclusion, citing ongoing challenges from "soft nihilism" to a degraded popular culture. Nor do we profess any illusions that such progress that has been made is bankable for the future. Still, the evidence we have amassed shows significant strides on a number of key fronts, and for all the caveats one might raise, there is reason to celebrate.

Michael Mattair writes that "one may question the reliability of [our] statistical metrics": as a high-school teacher, he believes that improvements in test scores comes less from better instruction than from playing to the numbers. To take his last point first: we relied on statistical indicators that are widely believed to be the most accurate available. We accepted the data and its implications when they were negative, and we should accept them when the trend breaks upward.

Which is not to say that test scores measure everything that is important in education. But they do measure *some* things, and here, too, the news is often mixed. We know from international comparisons, for example, that our students are badly lagging behind students of other nations in many subjects. At any rate, if we do not use tests to measure knowledge, what other objective measures would Mr. Mattair have us rely on? The self-esteem and self-assessment of students?

Paul McFadden makes an interesting suggestion about the "lucky accident" of decreased crime, but his causal specifics are difficult to prove or disprove. It may be that improvements in technology have made it easier to fight and prevent crime—certainly, as we noted, wiser use of technology had a hand in Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's successes in New York City—but it is hard to imagine that surveillance cameras and cell phones alone explain the extraordinary drop in crime that we have witnessed over the past fifteen years. (There were 2,200 homicides in New York City in 1991, and fewer than 500 last year.) Other factors must be invoked. Barry Nester's speculation about virtual alternatives to crime is novel but not very persuasive in this regard. He is likely succumbing to the fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*.

Lazaro Rodriguez suggests that one of the main factors in the drop in the illegitimacy rate is technology like DNA testing. But the overall illegitimacy rate is at an all-time high, so if DNA testing is effective, it is not reversing an alarming trend. We are not aware of any empirical studies that confirm his overall theory, but we are certainly open to the argument that "wage garnishment is a useful contraceptive for the irresponsible."

Gordon J. Kerr finds it "circular" to argue that tighter welfare laws enacted in the 1990's led to a morally "healthy" drop in the welfare caseload. But what actually happened? Many people left the welfare rolls before they could be disqualified; the law created new expectations, and they reacted accordingly. That is healthy. Moreover, many of those who have gone off welfare for whatever reason seem to be doing better and living more responsible, less dependent lives.

Michael Cameron is surprised that we made no mention of the study by John Donohue and Steven Levitt of the link between legalized abortion and reduced crime. Levitt's thesis went unmentioned because we believe it has been adequately refuted by others. As Ramesh Ponnuru has written:

> If Levitt's theory were correct, one would expect murder rates to have dropped among younger teens before it dropped among older teens. The fourteen-year-olds of 1993 should have been more law-abiding than the fourteen-year-olds of 1983, since legalized abortion would have, supposedly, snuffed out many criminals in the later group. There should have been a much smaller drop in crime among the twenty-five-year-olds, all of whom in both years had been born before Roe. As [Steve] Sailer notes, this is the reverse of what happened. Between 1983 and 1993, murder rates went down among people older than twenty-five and went up among those younger. "[T]he first cohort to survive legalized abortion went on the worst youth murder spree in American history." [Ted] Joyce notes that Levitt's theory also implies that crime should have fallen more among blacks than whites—since blacks would have reaped more of the supposed crime-fighting benefits of abortion. Didn't happen.

Thus, no one can be sure how much of a role, if any, abortion has played in the drop in crime, but it is certainly not preponderant. Even if it was, there are far more decent ways to decrease crime than to destroy children in the womb.

Vietnam Revisited

TO THE EDITOR:

Arthur Herman's views about Vietnam suffer from the same defect as those of his opponents: his primary interest is contemporary politics and not the truth about the past ["Who Owns the Vietnam War?," December 2007]. He does not care so much about what went on in Vietnam as he does about scoring points against liberals who oppose President Bush today over Iraq. Calling on history to orchestrate political commitments in the present is hardly new, but it is not the only use of the past, and surely not the most honorable.

The title of Mr. Herman's essay, "Who Owns the Vietnam War?," calls attention to his supposition

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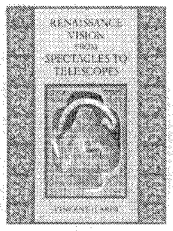

Renaissance Vision from Spectacles to Telescopes

Vincent Ilardi

The monograph deals with the history of eyeglasses from their invention in Italy ca. 1286 to the appearance of the telescope three centuries later. Eyeglasses served an important technological function at both the intellectual and practical level. A subthesis of the book is that Florence, rather than Venice, seems to have dominated the commercial market for eyeglasses during the fifteenth century, when the ability to grind convex lenses for various levels of presbyopia and the ability to grind concave lenses for the correction of myopia occurred.

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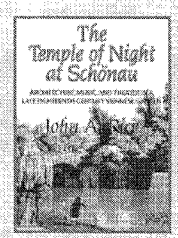

The Temple of Night at Schönau: Architecture, Music, and Theater in a Late Eighteenth Century Viennese Garden

John A. Rice

Between 1796 and 1800 Baron Peter von Braun transformed his estate into an English-style landscape park. The most celebrated building was the Temple of Night, a domed rotunda accessible only through a meandering rockwork grotto. Only the ruins of the Temple survive, and this book brings it back to life by assembling the many descriptions of it by early nineteenth-century eyewitnesses.

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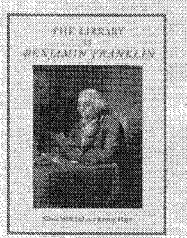

The Library of Ben Franklin

Edwin Wolf 2nd and Kevin J. Hayes

(Joint publication with the American Philosophical Society and The Library Company of Philadelphia)

Benjamin Franklin's library, the largest and best private library at the time of his death in 1790, was sold by his grandson and subsequently sold again. None of the catalogues of the collection survive. In 1956, Edwin Wolf discovered the unique shelfmarks Franklin used to identify his books. His work to reconstruct a catalogue of the library was unfinished at the time of his death. Kevin J. Hayes took up the work as the tercentenary of Franklin's birth approached. Everything found to date, close to 4,000 entries, is compiled here.

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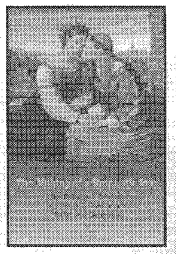

The Making of a Romantic Icon: The Religious Context of Friedrich Overbeck's Italia und Germania

Lionel Gossman

WINNER OF THE JOHN FREDERICK LEWIS AWARD FOR 2007

Friedrich Overbeck's "Italia and Germania" (1811-1828) is a well-known image in its native Germany, where it is seen as an allegory of the perennial longing of German artists and poets for the beauty and harmony of the land "where the lemon tree blooms." The contextualization of "Italia and Germania" in this essay reveals a painting that is an emblem not only of the sisterhood of North and South, the early German and early Italian traditions in art, but of the general Romantic longing for reconciliation, reunion, and the overcoming of historical alienation.

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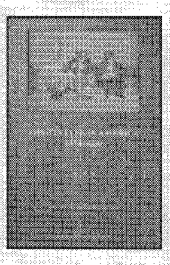

The Tintype in America, 1856-1880

Janice G. Schimmelman

The book offers a history of the tintype from its invention in Paris to the end of the wet-plate era. Americans embraced the tintype. They were comfortable with its artlessness and liked the come-as-you-are independence of the thing. The stories were real, untouched by the manipulations of artist or photographer, and unencumbered by Romantic notions of moral and civic virtue.

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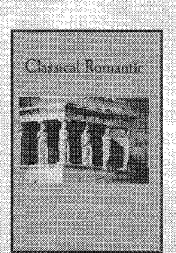

Classical Romantic: Identity in the Latin Poetry of Vincent Bourne

Estelle Haan

Vincent Bourne (1694-1747) was one of the most popular Latin poets of his day. His Latin verse appealed to early eighteenth-century and Romantic sensibilities. The present study examines a broad range of that Latin verse in its classical, neo-Latin, and vernacular contexts with particular attention to the theme of identity (and differing forms of identity. Appended to the study are the texts (with Haan's translations) of the Latin poetry discussed.

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that history is a piece of intellectual property that politicians can acquire for their campaigns. It bothers him that liberals have taken over this piece of the past, and he wants to reclaim it for his own purposes. But as Herman is only too willing to point out in the case of the liberals' history, bad things happen when the past is suborned to the present. Only Mr. Herman's determinedly selective reading of recent scholarship on the war could suggest that there is compelling agreement on anything.

Anyone who thinks that the 1954 Geneva Accords established a new republic in the south of Vietnam has not read them. If Mr. Herman believes that Richard Nixon withdrew American troops because of success on the battlefield, or persuaded China and Russia to turn off the spigot of support for Hanoi, he has not looked at the evidence. He is certainly not entirely wrong on these and other issues, but he pushes, indeed shoves, the evidence in the direction he wants it to go. He does not see the ambiguities, and slips easily into simple moralistic judgments about what could have or would have happened. His vision of the war in Vietnam is as mythic as that of his adversaries.

For one interested in historical truth, the last people to listen to about Vietnam are political men like President Bush, Senator John Kerry, and Daniel Ellsberg, whom Mr. Herman cites in setting the stage for his discussion. One does not, however, expect statesmen to be primarily engaged in truth-telling, and so their distortions can be dismissed. But because the moral obligations of would-be scholars are different, the intrusion of politics into their writing is more upsetting. Unless we maintain some respect for the aim of establishing the complexity of what really went on in the past, we contribute to the debasement of public understanding.

BRUCE KUKLICK
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR:

By one measure, the last four years have been a bonanza for historians like myself who teach and write about the Vietnam war. The Iraq conflict, so reminiscent of the American struggle in Vietnam, has sparked enormous interest in the subject among publishers and students. By another measure, however, it has been a thoroughly depressing time. Politicians and pundits have frequently played fast and loose with history—and misrepresented the findings of recent historical scholarship—in order to score points in the ongoing debate over the Iraq war. The gap between academic and popular discussion of the war has rarely yawned so wide.

Polemics like Arthur Herman's "Who Owns the Vietnam War?" are part of the problem. Mr. Herman claims to show how recent scholarship has demolished the old shibboleths about the war held sacred by the "liberals and leftists" who have led the charge against George W. Bush's policies in Iraq. While the Left-leaning establishment views Ho Chi Minh as a dedicated nationalist, Mr. Herman contends, new research reveals him to have been a craven Communist. While the Left sees South Vietnam as an illegitimate Potemkin village, new scholarship indicates it was a viable nation that commanded impressive support among its people. While the Left views American veterans as drug-addled misfits abused by their government, new writing reveals them to be successful citizens. And so on.

Unquestionably, Mr. Herman has a point. Critics of American policy in Vietnam have too often advanced a hopelessly one-dimensional view of the war that has not stood up to scholarly investigation. But he merely replaces the Left's caricature of the war with a new, equally far-fetched caricature that gratifies conservatives by making the U.S. intervention in Vietnam seem eminently sensible. He accomplishes this feat by drawing heavily on a handful of highly tendentious works by conservative authors.

Some of these studies, notably Lewis Sorley's *A Better War*, have been well received across the political spectrum. Others, especially Mark Moyar's *Triumph Forsaken*, have been subjected to withering criticism outside conservative circles. The important issue, however, is not the quality of these works as much as the fact that they represent just one current in a vast outpouring of writing on the Vietnam war in recent years. To claim, as Mr. Herman does, that the "new generation" of historians "overwhelmingly agrees" with his point of view—or, for that matter, with any single point of view—is simply wrong.

On the contrary, recent studies point in various interpretive directions, making it more difficult than ever to defend blanket generalizations about the war. The multiplicity of viewpoints undoubtedly owes something to the diversity of ideological agendas informing them, but it owes far more to the fact that newly accessible documentary evidence from Vietnam, China, and Russia, as well as the United States, leads to no easy conclusions.

Mr. Herman is right that Ho Chi Minh was a convinced Communist for much of his life, but evidence from around the world also confirms that (contrary to what he writes) Hanoi was no simple puppet of Beijing or Moscow. Mr. Herman is on safe ground in suggesting that the South Vietnamese government enjoyed greater independence and legitimacy than historians have usually allowed, but evidence from Vietnam suggests that (again, contrary to what he writes) the Saigon regime never truly rivaled the Communists for the support of the bulk of the population. One could go on.

Left and Right will no doubt continue to clamor for "ownership" of the Vietnam war, which is too bad for those interested in fair and detached treatments of the subject. One hopes that sensible readers, tired of brazen grabs to control history, will recognize that the best case for ownership of the Vietnam war and its lessons lies with those who are able to see beyond the myths, and appreciate the immense complexity of the past.

MARK ATWOOD LAWRENCE
University of Texas
Austin, Texas

TO THE EDITOR:

Arthur Herman's otherwise excellent essay appears

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to downplay the devastating effects of Nixon's bombing campaigns in Cambodia. He describes the precision of smart bombs and claims that "the collateral damage caused by American bombing [in Vietnam] . . . was actually very limited."

Philip Short, Michael Lind, Elizabeth Becker, and others have offered clear evidence that the bombing created enormous hardship for Cambodia's rural populations, causing large peasant migrations to both Phnom Penh and the forests. Regardless of how "smart" the bombs were, there were a lot of them—according to some accounts, more than were dropped in all of World War II—and many Cambodian villages were destroyed. The bombing was also an effective recruiting tool for the Khmer Rouge, although the banditry of the South Vietnamese troops in Cambodia was also important in creating support for the Communists.

Although the bombing might have been justified by Cambodia's violation of its claimed neutrality, the collateral damage made it easy for the antiwar Left to condemn everything we did in Indochina by pointing to an apparent lack of sympathy for the civilian population.

On the other hand, Mr. Herman is right to dismiss attempts to hold the American bombing accountable for the Cambodian genocide that followed. Some have proposed that the "savage" American bombing drove the Khmer Rouge to respond with savagery of their own—but no other population in history subjected to bombing has reacted by murdering millions of compatriots. Pol Pot was a follower of Marxism-Leninism who adopted the terror strategies of Stalin and Mao. They were called Red Khmers for a reason.

PETER WILSON
Educational Television Cambodia
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

Arthur Herman's excellent reassessment of the Vietnam war is long overdue, and much welcomed by those of us who have admired America's long sacrifice in that country. I would like to buttress Mr. Herman's point about the "domino theory," which, as he points out "had always been ridiculed as fantasy" by antiwar critics. It is certainly true, as he says, that the fall of South Vietnam also led to the fall of Laos and Cambodia to Communist terror. But what is equally true is that many dominos did not fall specifically because America's stand in South Vietnam gave other Asian countries the decade-long breathing room they needed to develop stable governments and fend off Communist insurgencies.

In the 1960's, many thought that it was only a matter of time before the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and even Singapore would become Communist. While there were close calls, none did, because their leadership saw and believed in the American commitment to democracy in Asia, and stood firm. Americans should be proud of our role in the success of Southeast Asia and understand the lesson it holds for the war in Iraq and the future of the Middle East.

LESLIE DAVID SIMON
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

Arthur Herman's brilliant essay puts the lie to certain tendentious readings of the Vietnam war and its aftermath.

"Today, America can regain the sense of pride that existed before Vietnam. But it cannot be achieved by refighting a war that is finished as far as America is concerned. . . . [T]hese events, tragic as they are, portend neither the end of the world nor of America's leadership in the world." President Gerald R. Ford uttered these words in a speech at Tulane University on April 23, 1975, in the final days of America's involvement in Vietnam. The crowd roared and gave him a standing ovation. The military draft had ended, and American troops and POW's had returned home two years earlier. America had washed its hands of Vietnam—but millions of lives were still at stake.

Halfway around the world, my family experienced the unfolding of the tragic events in South Vietnam. The day after South Vietnam's president Nguyen Van Thieu resigned, my family and I were put aboard an American evacuation aircraft. But my father and three uncles lingered, and spent the next decade undergoing a prison-camp "reeducation" by the victorious North Vietnamese Communists. They managed to survive, but many others did not, and hundreds of thousands of our fellow Vietnamese perished on the high seas while attempting to flee our native land.

Two weeks after the fall of Saigon, Senator Robert Byrd commented that "barmaids, prostitutes, and criminals" should be screened out as "excludable categories" for emigration. Senator Joseph Biden charged that the Ford administration "had not informed Congress adequately about the number of refugees"—as if anyone actually knew during the chaotic evacuation. "I think the Vietnamese are better off in Vietnam," sniffed George McGovern in *Newsweek*. Despite these rejections, my family was resettled in America, and we are forever grateful.

A few years after my father was released—thanks to President Ronald Reagan's leadership and the efforts of his special envoy, retired Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman John Vessey, Jr.—James Webb wrote in the *New York Times* that "Vietnam is the great unfinished morality play of our time. We have never before abandoned an ally on the battlefield—an ally, incidentally, whose casualty rate was 40 times ours." Let us hope our country does not turn its back on our Iraqi allies.

QUANG X. PHAM
Mission Viejo, California

ARTHUR HERMAN writes:

It is frustrating when the academic mind chooses to use critical detachment as an excuse for intellectual and moral evasion. Bruce Kuklick and Mark Atwood Lawrence object to my argument, but instead of addressing it head on, they affect a pose of scholarly disinterestedness and accuse me of bad taste for sorting through the evidence and drawing the conclusion that the United States won the war in Vietnam on the battlefield but gave it away on the political front.

The only substantive criticism Mr. Kuklick offers

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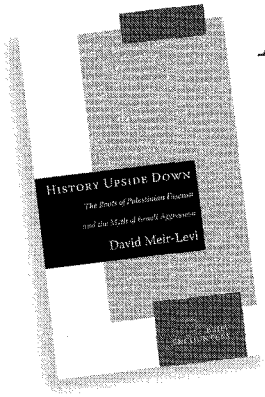

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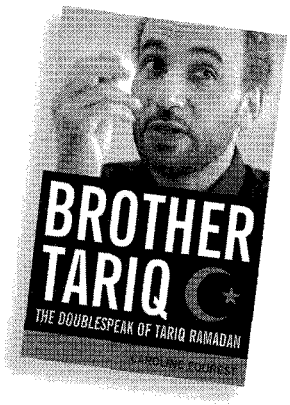

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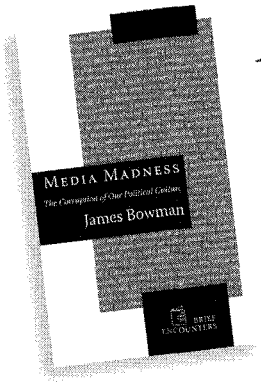

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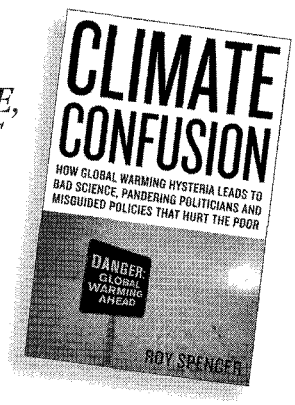
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is that I am partially wrong on two points. "Anyone," he writes, "who thinks that the 1954 Geneva Accords established a new republic in the south of Vietnam has not read them." The word "established" is his, not mine, but no one can deny the obvious fact that the accords created the conditions under which an independent South Vietnam could emerge. As to whether or not it was Nixon's diplomatic success with Russia and China and General Abrams's success on the battlefield that enabled the U.S. to disengage from Vietnam, perhaps Mr. Lawrence should send Mr. Kuklick his copy of Lewis Sorley's *A Better War*, which gives chapter and verse on this matter and for whose detached legitimacy he vouches.

Mr. Lawrence, for his own part, asserts vaguely that "evidence from Vietnam" and "from around the world" contradicts or complicates some of my claims. Thus, Ho Chi Minh was not merely a "simple" puppet of Moscow and Beijing. But I never suggested otherwise—what puppet *ever* is a mere proxy? In the end, Mr. Lawrence seems to want me to split the ideological difference. Conceding that I am often "on solid ground," he still wants me to leave running room for the standard liberal narrative of American hubris in Vietnam.

I thank Peter Wilson for his generous words. As for his criticism, my remarks about the "very limited" damage from so-called smart bombs were made in the context of the air war over Vietnam, not Cambodia. What he asserts about the latter may well be true, but it has always struck me that the real culprit in the Cambodian tragedy was the feckless Prince Sihanouk. It was he who first allowed his country to become a North Vietnamese safe haven, in violation of agreements that he himself had signed; who then encouraged the American bombing of his country while insisting that it be kept secret so as not to offend Hanoi; and who ended up forging an alliance with the genocidal Khmer Rouge in the vain hope they would restore him to power.

I thank Leslie David Simon and Quang X. Pham for their letters. Mr. Pham's moving tale incidentally answers my title question, "Who Owns the Vietnam War?," to which Messrs. Kuklick and Lawrence take exception. It was our allies the Vietnamese who were really left with it. We need constantly to remind ourselves of what happened to those who were left behind when a great power ran from its responsibilities. Here, *pace* Mr. Simon, is where America's role in Southeast Asia is not a source of unmitigated pride.

This lesson first came home to me while studying in Paris in the 1980's. There I met a Vietnamese woman who had fled with her family from the Communist takeover. Her brother, a pilot in the South Vietnamese air force, was shot down and killed during the final Communist offensive when her country was overrun. The bitterness she expressed toward America for its abandonment was profound.

Our professors and our textbooks, with their supposed appreciation for "the immense complexity of the past," taught us that people like her did not really exist: that South Vietnam had been populated either by self-interested American puppets or hapless peasants who secretly yearned to be united with the North through a Communist victory. What I learned was that many South Vietnamese fought and risked everything for a country that they believed in. This encounter first woke me from my own "dogmatic slumbers" (a phrase whose origin Mr. Kuklick will recognize) over Vietnam. It would be nice to think that Quang Pham's letter, if not my essay, might encourage others to do the same.

Seeing China

TO THE EDITOR:

As an American who has been living in China for the last five years, I found Gary Rosen's article simplistic ["My Short March Through China," December 2007]. He finds the rule of China's Communist government wanting on the basis of Western standards of liberalization, but the changes that it has brought about are in fact remarkable by any standard. We should not forget that prior to 2003, getting married in China required the permission of one's boss. Moving from one province to another required a travel permit. All of society was controlled by the government. Disassembling this monolithic structure has been the very definition of a Herculean task, and under the circumstances China's leaders have performed admirably.

As for Tiananmen Square, almost all of the Chinese whom I know personally—including one who was a student protester—feel today, in hindsight, that the government was essentially right to clamp down on the demonstrations. The 200 million Chinese who have escaped absolute poverty since then are often adduced: where would they be today if Tiananmen had festered into a revolution? Before automatically replying, "better off," one should consider the nature of Chinese society. Even today, a majority of Chinese have but a rudimentary education. Democracy without an educated citizenry is a formula for tyranny of the majority. For this very reason, most educated Chinese today do not long for Western-style democracy. The 900 million poor would easily outvote the 400 million middle-class, and possibly return the country to a purer brand of Communism. Education and prosperity must precede democracy.

DEAN A. NASH
Shenzhen, China

TO THE EDITOR:

Gary Rosen writes: "Thinking about Yuan and her friends—cosmopolitan, English-speaking students at China's most elite university—I find it difficult to imagine that the People's Republic will easily contain them." But history has shown that precisely the well-to-do elite are most easily co-opted and contained by a dictatorship. It is the disenfranchised, who cannot even hope to send their children to university or to secure them good jobs, who are the most disenchanted with the government. Of course, the government is not likely to encourage foreign journalists

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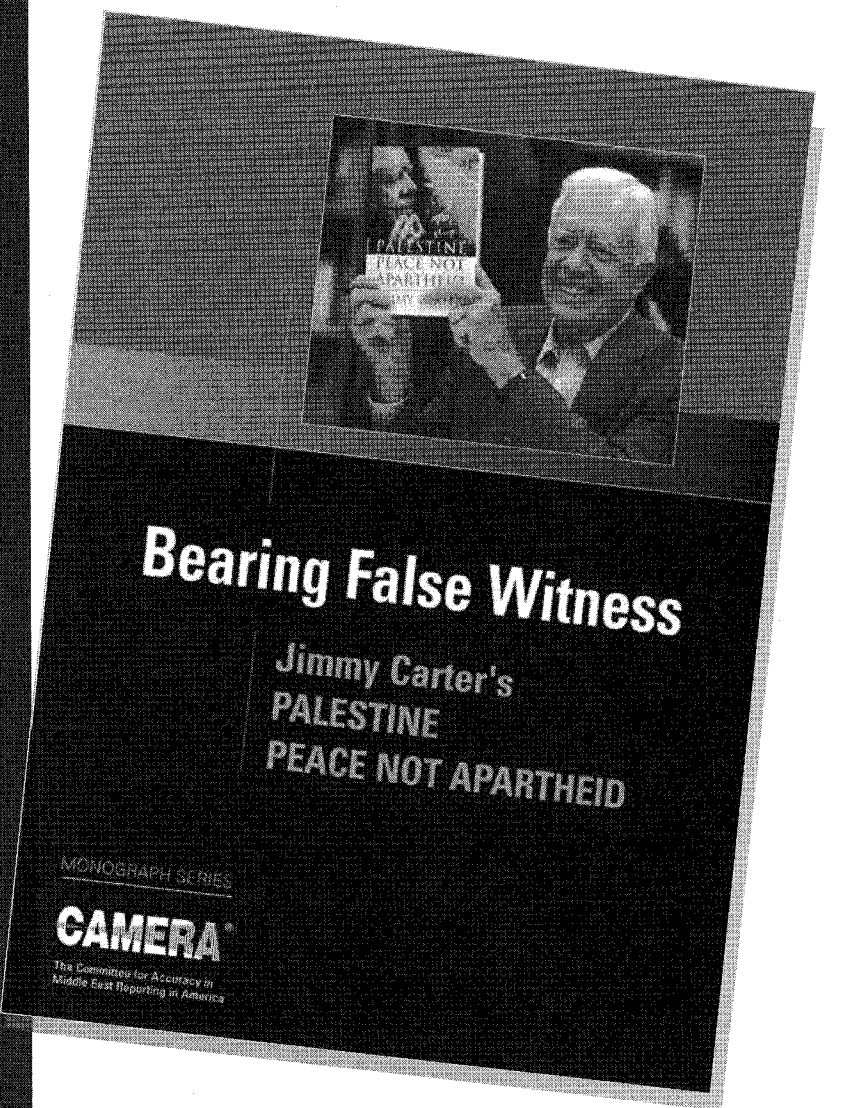

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to speak to such people, but they are far more numerous than the jet-setting elite whom Mr. Rosen met.

GILMAN GRUNDY
Shenzhen, China

TO THE EDITOR:

Gary Rosen reports that the students he met during his trip to China tended instinctively to defend their government's response to the 1989 student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square. Many Chinese students whom I have met in graduate schools in the U.S. have been similarly defensive; several admitted that they never even believed there had been a violent suppression of protesters until fellow students who had lived in Beijing at the time told them what they themselves had witnessed.

This inability of so many Chinese to discuss the subject reasonably has made me very skeptical about how change will take place in China and in what direction it will lead. I wish I could believe that it is just government pressure or censorship that keeps people from thinking more critically about political rights, but my many conversations with Chinese students have led me to fear that their response has as much to do with the prevailing Chinese culture.

AARON BEACH
Westminster, Colorado

TO THE EDITOR:

Although I am ordinarily a mild-mannered, reasonably agreeable fellow, by the time I got past the fifth paragraph of Gary Rosen's article, I lost it. How anyone, especially an American journalist, could accept such hospitality from the Chinese government and then turn around and complain of being manipulated is incomprehensible to me. What mystical spirit operated during Mr. Rosen's junket to strip him and his colleagues of their journalistic integrity? Was all the good food and expensive linen enough to make them suppress the journalistic urge to ask incisive and informed questions? Why was there such concern for "not wishing to jeopardize our sponsors or future trips"? I could not believe that a group of American journalists could be bought so cheaply and quickly.

I was at least warmed to read that Mr. Rosen's group spent some time talking with students in Peking University's journalism program. The conversations he describes are similar to what I have experienced in six years teaching in an English-language program for foreign students at Guangdong University in Guangzhou. The students are marvelous, and many of the program's graduates now work in China for Western media outlets like the *Los Angeles Times* and the Associated Press as well as for Chinese news organizations. Watching them all cope with the indignities of journalism in China is thrilling. Within them are the seeds of a new China (although I doubt I will see it in my lifetime), and one can

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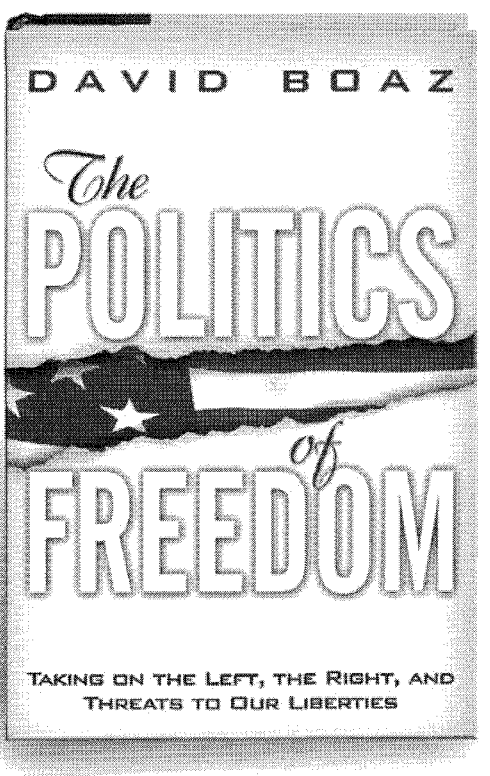

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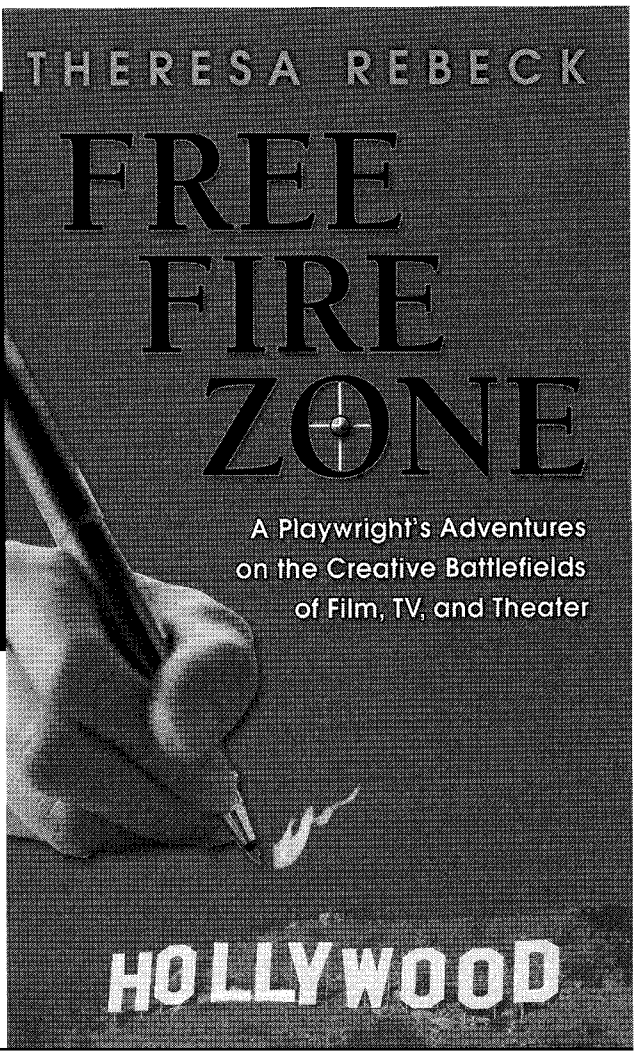

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only hope they will not need another Tiananmen to secure it.

ARNOLD ZEITLIN
Guangdong University of Foreign Studies
Guangzhou, China

TO THE EDITOR:

It was refreshing to read Gary Rosen's article about his trip to China, which shows a Western journalist who was not easily won over by the regime's effort to project a false image of prosperity and "progressive thinking" to the outside world.

The Chinese people, from the millions of maltreated peasants, religious groups, and democrats to high-ranking party officials and prosperous entrepreneurs, know otherwise. In fact, there is growing evidence that the number of people in China who are dissatisfied with the rule of the Communist party is nearing critical mass. More than 28 million Chinese have publicly declared their withdrawals from the party and its affiliated organizations through the "Quit the CCP" movement. This is something that outsiders often fail—or, because of vested interests, refuse—to see, but reports like Gary Rosen's help pierce through the veil.

GUY CHEN
Beijing, China

TO THE EDITOR:

Gary Rosen's excellent article misses one important question about China: can all the economic development and prosperity he observed abruptly end, and if so, when? The history of the Soviet Union is instructive on this score. The establishment of Communist rule in Russia was quickly followed by enormous economic devastation as the new regime seized control of land and agricultural and commercial production. To restore a semblance of normalcy, Lenin and the Communist party soon adopted a "new economic policy" that allowed for small private enterprises. The economic situation improved for a time, until Stalin in the 1930's rolled back the reforms. Again, private property was confiscated, private enterprise was abolished, and millions of people were arrested and killed.

Something similar could easily happen in China. For now, the government is all about "good will and understanding," but the situation could change in the blink of an eye. None of China's new prosperity—and no one's property—is guaranteed by the present regime, as we may find out in the event of a crisis in the Middle Kingdom.

YURY V. KISSIN
Rutgers University
Piscataway, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

Confucius said that true knowledge means knowing what one knows, and what one does not know. Gary Rosen shows us how "managed" the Western journalism coming out of the People's Republic of China is, and admirably refuses to

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join the ranks of the well connected instant experts now writing on China. But he is rare.

GEORGE J. LEONARD
San Francisco State University
San Francisco, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Gary Rosen's essay about China was the best I have ever read by a Westerner in terms of its accuracy and its penetrating insight. Kudos to Mr. Rosen.

YANPING GUI
Bellevue, Nebraska

GARY ROSEN writes:

Dean A. Nash is rightly impressed by China's socioeconomic progress over the past several decades, and considers me naïve for suggesting that the "monolithic structure" of Communist rule could be safely "disassembled" any faster. I have no quarrel with his stress on gradualism in reforming a country of China's size and backwardness; I just do not see that democratization, gradual or otherwise, is any part of the Communist party's agenda. China's rulers have persuaded themselves that expanding economic and cultural freedoms are perfectly compatible with continued authoritarian rule. I do not think the combination can be sustained.

The brutal suppression of the 1989 protests in Tiananmen Square was both a horror to behold and a lost opportunity. Substantial elements of the Communist party had been prepared to heed the students' call for political reform and opening, but the hard-liners won out, and today the results are clear: a rapidly modernizing China unable to cope with its growing pluralism and the varied discontents of its urban and rural populations. The choice in 1989 was not between a military crackdown and the "revolution" whose specter is invoked by Mr. Nash and other apologists for Beijing. A reformist path might have been charted in politics just as it has been in the other spheres of Chinese life. Indeed, many of the largely economic problems now facing China—corruption, environmental degradation, sub-standard manufacturing—might have been addressed more effectively in a more open, accountable political system.

Gilman Grundy and Aaron Beach are too categorical about the views of China's educated middle class. Many of them, to be sure, have prospered under the new dispensation, and there is a strong quietist tendency in Chinese culture. As I joked to the students whom we met at Peking University, "I know it must sound to you like all we say is human rights, human rights, human rights. But to us, it sounds like all you say is stability, stability, stability." My sense is that many of them, aware as they are of political arrangements elsewhere in the world, are embarrassed by the fact that their country is still ruled by a small, secretive coterie of bureaucrats and soldiers. They are proud of modern China—and have profited from its rise—but they know that modern nations are not run this way. When a downturn comes, as it inevitably will, I suspect that many of them will have second thoughts. Even now, as Guy Chen eloquently attests in his letter, it is not difficult to find sizable pockets of dissent and protest.

I am not sure why my article was so upsetting to Arnold Zeitlin or why he makes such nasty, unwarranted accusations against me and the other journalists on the trip. Of course we knew that the trip was sponsored by a pro-Beijing group and would present us with only a certain view of developments in China. But the opportunity to visit China and to encounter high-level Chinese officials does not come very often, and we all learned a great deal from the trip, in part because it demonstrated so effectively the insecurity and mania for control of our Communist hosts. This was a valuable lesson, and it has been reflected in all the pieces that have been written by members of our delegation. Would Mr. Zeitlin prefer that we had never visited China or written critically about the way our trip was managed?

My thanks to Yury V. Kissin, George J. Leonard, and Yanping Gui for their insights into the current situation in China and their kinds words about my piece.

Duly Noted

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin is entitled to his views and analysis of Idith Zertal and Akiva Eldar's *Lords of the Land*, but he is not entitled to mislead his readers ["What the Settlements Have Achieved," December 2007]. Idith Zertal has not published only one book prior to *Lords of the Land*, as he claims, but several. Her major work, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, has been published in seven languages, and will soon be published in two more.

CARL BROMLEY
Nation Books
New York City

HILLEL HALKIN writes:

I am sorry that I was unaware of Idith Zertal's other books and apologize for shortchanging her.

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Commentary
March 2008

The Election, the GOP—and Iraq

John Podhoretz

THE SWIFT, steep decline in Republican fortunes over the past few years has induced a state of vertigo in the party's body politic. Its elected officials, *eminences grises*, and rank-and-file members are all disoriented by the rapid plunge in the party's standing with the American people—just at the moment when they have to present the best possible case that their presidential candidate, and everyone who appears with him on the Republican ballot, are the proper stewards of the country's future.

Among Republican politicians, the funk set in after the midterm congressional elections in 2006, when Democrats took back control of the Senate and House of Representatives. Having grown comfortable in power over the course of a dozen years,* Republicans on Capitol Hill not only have found themselves coping with the ignominy of minority but have lately been assured by analysts that there is little or no chance of regaining the majority in either chamber over the course of the next three biennial elections.

The prospect of remaining powerless for at least six more years has proved so depressing that, by the end of this January, nineteen Republican House members had already announced they would not stand for reelection. Democrats have an excellent chance of winning at least half of those seats in November—which really does make the prospect of a Republican restoration in 2010 science-fictional.

As for the Senate, six of its Republicans are also retiring, and Democrats are favored to pick up at least two of the newly open seats. This pushes the possibility of a shift in control of the Senate even farther into the future than is the case with the House.

The despairing condition of the party's elected leadership has been mirrored this year in the low turnout of Republican voters in early presidential caucuses and primaries. In South Carolina, for example, 90,000 more Democrats than Republicans cast ballots for their preferred candidate—this, in a state that George Bush carried in 2004 by seventeen points. In New Hampshire, the gap between Democratic and Republican ballots cast was 52,000; in Iowa, there were 106,000 more Democratic than Republican caucus-goers. Since both Iowa and New Hampshire have bounced back and forth between candidates in recent elections,† this is another decidedly unfavorable portent for the GOP. If Republicans tacitly conclude that Iowa and New Hampshire are lost, they will end up assuring

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* Between 1995 and 2007, the only interruption in GOP control of the Senate occurred between June 2001 and November 2002 when the liberal Republican James Jeffords became an independent and cast his vote with the Democrats, thus permitting them a majority.

† Iowa went for Al Gore in 2000 but for Bush in 2004, while New Hampshire chose Bush in 2000 but John Kerry in 2004.

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an instant, if tiny, edge to the Democrats of eleven electoral votes, while granting the Democratic presidential contender the freedom to focus his or her resources and energy elsewhere.

The evident failure of Republican candidates to generate much enthusiasm among voters is an especially ominous development given the unique qualities of the 2008 election. Never before in the history of contemporary presidential politics—in which rank-and-file party members choose the victor in statewide contests rather than delegating the choice to backroom bosses—has there been an open slot at the top of the ticket in both parties. In every previous election season since 1952, a sitting President has run for reelection or his Vice President has run to succeed him. As a result, the party in power, with its candidate all but chosen beforehand, usually plays to a less engaged electorate during primary season. That is not the case this year, a fact to which the Democratic party responded with its most interesting primary battle in 40 years between the most serious female candidate in American history and the most serious African-American candidate in American history.

The Republican field could never have provoked the same degree of excitement—its only comparable claim to originality has been the presence in the race of the most serious Mormon candidate in American history—but, even so, it did comprise an uncommonly varied group of politicians from across the party's ideological spectrum. In 2007, moreover, those candidates conducted a series of debates notable for their specificity and their high level of argumentation. And yet, by January 2008, only 53 percent of Republican voters (compared with 76 percent of Democrats) professed themselves happy with their choices for President.

THERE ARE two possible explanations for the decline in Republican involvement. The first, and most obvious, is fatalism—a sense of hopelessness about the upcoming election traceable to a perception of the other side's inevitable victory. There is strong evidence for this in the inability of Republican candidates in 2007 to come anywhere close to the Democrats in raising money. Between them, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama received $100 million more in campaign contributions than all ten Republican candidates combined.

The second, and more telling, possibility is that there may simply be fewer Republicans in this presidential go-around. Just prior to the 2004 election, 37 percent of American voters, the highest number ever recorded, described themselves as Republican. Early polling in 2008 put the number of self-identified Republicans at about 25 percent.

True, the actual decline may turn out to be not quite so dramatic as this looks. People claim membership in a party, then drop the claim, then pick it up again. Thus, at the same early point in 2004, the Republican number was 28 percent, only to grow by one-third over the ten months leading up to the election. If one assumes the same growth in 2008, then 34 percent of American voters will identify themselves as Republicans in the final pre-election poll.

But that would still represent a loss since 2004 of every ninth Republican voter. The threat to the GOP is not that those seven million people will side with the Democrats, but that they will not go to the polls at all. Should that happen, Republicans unquestionably will lose—just as George W. Bush would have lost to John Kerry, and by a similar margin, in 2004.

Republicans received an early warning of things to come in November 2006, when the total GOP vote fell 4 percent below the previous midterm election in 2002. That marked a decline of 1.5 million voters, and a sharp reversal of a trend that had instilled confidence in Republicans about their supposedly iron hold on the American electorate.

The confidence was not entirely misplaced. Nationwide voting totals for the GOP had grown by leaps and bounds over the previous three elections. In 2000, Bush garnered eleven million more votes than Bob Dole had won in 1996, a jump of 25 percent.* In the 2002 midterm election, congressional Republicans augmented their total from the previous midterm by fourteen points nationwide. In 2004, Bush's vote grew by another 22 percent. These impressive gains, following hard upon the GOP's momentous victory in the 1994 midterm elections when the party won 52 House seats and eight Senate seats, seemed to presage an enduring shift toward the GOP.

Some Republicans and conservatives began to speculate that the march of history in their direction was unstoppable. The population of the United States, they would point out, was transforming itself geographically and demographically in ways that could only ballast and bolster the GOP for decades to come. The Northeast and the Rust Belt, both Democratic strongholds, were slowly emptying out as jobs and people moved south and west to solid Republican states where the new arrivals were

* Even if one adds every one of Ross Perot's eight million votes to Dole's in 1996, Bush still bested their combined total by four million, or 10 percent.

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happy to find not only balmier weather but a more conservative political atmosphere.

Meanwhile, the Democratic party was ever more perceptibly becoming the province of singles—the never married, the divorced, the widowed—as well as the elderly. These people were obviously not reproducing at a high rate, if at all. By contrast, married couples, especially those with children, were increasingly voting Republican, and their children would be likely to do so as well. Even among Hispanics, the fastest-growing segment of the population, there was hope for a Republican future thanks to their strong family orientation and generally conservative values.

The political strategist Karl Rove marshaled such bits of data and many others like them as he worked toward the creation of a "permanent Republican majority." The data were seductive, as only data can be that show one's side winning. But they were also seriously misleading. In 2006, the geographic and demographic makeup of the American electorate was little different from what it had been four years earlier, and yet the number of votes cast for Democrats grew by 25 percent. Voters are not collector's items to be hoarded and sealed in plastic by the parties they vote for. They are free individuals whose views and preferences are subject to change. And change they did.

The question is why they changed, and the search for an answer to that question has necessarily become a preoccupation on the Right.

One body of opinion assigns the primary responsibility to the corruption-and-morality scandals that beset the Republican party beginning in 2005. A Texas prosecutor indicted Tom DeLay, the second-ranking Republican in the House, for alleged campaign-finance irregularities; the indictment forced DeLay to resign his seat. A San Diego congressman tearfully confessed to taking bribes in the millions from a defense contractor, and was hauled off to jail for eight years. The machinations of the lobbyist Jack Abramoff led to the guilty pleas of an Ohio congressman and his chief of staff on bribery charges, and of two mid-level executive-branch officials for obstruction of justice. A Florida House member resigned after ABC News disclosed salacious e-mails and instant messages he had sent to a teenage boy who had once been a congressional page. And I. Lewis Libby, the chief of staff to Vice President Dick Cheney, was found guilty on highly convoluted perjury and obstruction-of-justice charges stemming from the revelation of a CIA officer's name in a newspaper column.

That in at least two of these cases—DeLay's and Libby's—the prosecution was politicized to an unholy degree was immaterial. This was an ongoing cascade of news involving Republicans and courtrooms, indictments, guilty pleas, guilty verdicts, and resignations, and its effect over time was corrosive.

A second, related, body of opinion holds that the GOP had become *politically* corrupt in the twelve years following its takeover of Capitol Hill. Known for preaching fiscal prudence and limited government, the Republican party turned its back on these core precepts to rain taxpayer dollars on constituents in the form of pork-barrel spending. In 1995, the party's first year in power, principled Republicans had slashed the number of earmarks—that is, specific bits of federal spending targeted at individual congressional districts—from 4,200 to 1,300. In the following year they cut the number from 1,300 to 958. But in 1998, with both Bill Clinton and the GOP reeling from the fallout of the Monica Lewinsky revelations, Republican politicians desperately sought, like Democrats of old, to buy voter fealty through earmarks. The number jumped to 2,000, and from there continued to climb year by year until it reached a staggering 14,000 in 2005.

According to this analysis, the resulting spectacle was more than conservative voters could stomach. Rather than agreeing to provide an implicit approval of conduct they reviled, they just stayed home. "We forgot why the American people sent us to Washington," Senator John McCain would say in his campaign stump speech by way of explaining the party's 2006 setback.

This dual portrait of far-reaching corruption, personal and political, is of a piece with the most substantive self-criticism on the Right: that during their time in power, Republicans lost their philosophical and ideological moorings. Instead of limiting the size or reach of government, they acquiesced in or led the way to its expansion.

The litany here is long. In 2001, the Bush White House joined with liberal Democrats in a piece of education legislation, No Child Left Behind, that boldly inserted the federal government into what historically had been for the most part an enterprise of states and localities. In 2002, Bush signed the McCain-Feingold campaign-finance bill, which set severe limits on political speech during the two months leading up to an election. In 2003, the Republican-led House and Senate pushed through a new entitlement program providing prescription drugs to the elderly, with DeLay using

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unethical strong-arm tactics to force skeptical conservative House members into compliance. Finally, in 2006, Bush and the Republican leadership enraged the party's core supporters with their aggressive advocacy of an immigration bill weighted toward finding a way for undocumented aliens to remain in the United States, and inadequate at best in laying out a strategy to limit or end illegal immigration altogether.

IT IS undeniable that all these problems played a part both in depressing Republican turnout in 2006—convincing independent voters who had hitherto sided with the GOP into pulling the lever for the Democrats—and in rallying Democratic passions. But the thesis that Republicans failed in 2006 and may be doomed to failure in 2008 *because* of them is highly questionable.

The corruption scandals on Capitol Hill were serious, and the DeLay indictment in particular felled a very powerful Republican. But DeLay resigned from the House six months before the 2006 election. Of the other 228 GOP members in 2006, only five were caught up in scandals.* A Republican voter satisfied with his own representative's personal conduct would be unlikely to cast a vote against him in a close race on account of the ephebophilic flirtations of a member from Florida.

There was, moreover, little or no evidence that the turn away from the seventeen incumbents who lost their House seats in 2006 was owing to anger over their voting record on spending, earmarks, Bush-era expansion of government, or immigration. Indeed, one of the House's two most virulent *opponents* of immigration, J.D. Hayworth of Arizona, lost his own reelection bid by four points.

The problem with the conventional diagnoses of the GOP's diminished condition is that they are themselves polemical in nature. Though they are offered to explain the disaster of 2006, their larger purpose is to direct the party's future conduct, by aligning it more closely with the ideological predilections of the critics. Those critics have a point, and a good one: a spendthrift Republican party too long in power will indeed tend toward the brazen conduct of Democratic Congresses past. But this alone cannot account for the unambiguous and wholesale dismissal of the GOP from the leadership of Congress.

For a midterm election, what happened in 2006 was an uncommon event: a national wave. In the past half-century, there have been only two others like it, the first in 1974 when Democrats won 75 seats in the House and four in the Senate and the second in 1994. In all three cases, there was a single, identifiable, overwhelming reason for the loss. The 1974 election occurred in the wake of Watergate. The 1994 election took place in the wake of the effort by the Clinton administration to nationalize health care. And the 2006 election? It was decided not because of a few corrupt Republicans, or because Congress had spent a great deal, or because of a flawed immigration measure. It was decided by the fact that the United States was on the verge of suffering a cataclysmic defeat in war.

THE WAR in Iraq has been the dominant issue in American politics since September 2002, when Bush first took Saddam Hussein's failure to comply with United Nations resolutions to the UN General Assembly. In 2004, John Kerry chose to make the war the focus of his own campaign against Bush. The President, contravening the advice given to him by many old GOP hands, accepted Kerry's challenge and turned his reelection into a referendum on the decision to go to war.

Nothing came along after 2004 to dislodge Iraq as the central issue. To the contrary: throughout Bush's second term, ideas and attitudes about the war consciously and unconsciously leached into domestic politics. The most notable event in that period was the devastation of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast by Hurricane Katrina in September 2005. In the wake of Katrina, fairly or unfairly, the political image of Bush and his administration that gained purchase was one of bumbling incompetence and indifference—and it gained purchase in part because of the increasingly distressing nature of the news from Iraq.

Frank Rich of the *New York Times* laid out the case:

> If you had to put a date on when the Iraq war did in the Bush administration, it would be late summer 2005. That's when the bungled federal response to Hurricane Katrina re-enacted the White House bungling of the war, this time with Americans as the principal victims. The stuff happening . . . in New Orleans was recognizably the same stuff that had happened on Donald Rumsfeld's watch in Baghdad.

For Left-liberals like Rich, Katrina was a fulfillment of their darkest expectations. Their view of Bush and his war had already hardened into concrete by the close of 2004: a *Washington Post* poll in

* Aside from those already mentioned, a congressman from New York made a tipsy pass at a constituent and a Congressman from California had a glancing involvement with Abramoff.

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December of that year found an astonishing 83 percent of Democrats saying the war had not been worth it. For antiwar advocates convinced of the apodictic certainty of their view, the federal response to Katrina afforded just another if particularly weighty item in their bill of particulars.

Meanwhile, for many of those who had supported the war, the Katrina crisis signified something far more disturbing. Having watched despairingly as roadside bombs and improvised explosive devices in Iraq did their monstrous work on a daily basis, they had already begun to entertain severe misgivings. Support for the war, which was at 50 percent nationally at the end of 2004, sank through 2005, almost entirely due to changes of heart among independent voters. And it was these independents who fled the farthest from Bush after Katrina. Washington's response to the catastrophe suggested to them that Bush did not know what he was doing—and therefore that the trust they had shown him in 2004 had been misplaced.

"This will take time and patience," Bush said of Iraq in 2005. But not until November of that year did he attempt to present an explicit "Strategy for Victory." And that document simply repackaged the administration's existing approach, envisioning not a battlefield defeat of the enemy but a gradual withering-away thanks to progress on the political and economic fronts and enhanced training of Iraqi troops.

As a matter of military strategy, as Bush would concede after the 2006 election, this was a flawed approach. It was also flawed as a matter of wartime leadership. In the realm of public opinion, a war must be won and an enemy must be defeated; for a nation with men fighting on foreign soil, there can be no other major goal. And there was worse. Bush had prevailed in 2004 by offering the implicit promise of winning in Iraq. But then, with great fanfare, he had announced that the great project of his second term would be—an effort to restructure Social Security. He had no mandate for such a thing, and the refusal of Republicans on Capitol Hill to line up behind it was a harbinger of similar discontents to come.

In October 2005, one month after Katrina, the President made the ill-advised decision to nominate his White House counsel Harriet Miers for a Supreme Court vacancy. This caused an eruption in elite conservative opinion, and he was forced to withdraw the nomination (while claiming that she was the one who dropped out). Miers was indeed a poor choice, but under different circumstances Bush would have had little difficulty in assuring her confirmation. What made the conservative revolt possible was not her lack of credentials but Bush's gradual loss of standing in his own party—a loss due entirely to the sense that he might be flying blind in Iraq.

He was even more compromised in the early months of 2006 as Iraq descended into nightmarish sectarian violence following the February bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra. It was against this backdrop that the President advanced his immigration-reform bill. It was not well-drafted and deserved to be defeated. Even so, however, Bush had been championing most of its provisions since his days as governor of Texas, and his advocacy had not prevented a single conservative activist from supporting him wholeheartedly in 2000 or in 2004.

Had he come before the American people as the victor in Iraq, Bush would have had his immigration bill for the taking—with, to be sure, muted grumbling from some of his backers analogous to the grumbling after the passage of his education legislation in 2001 or the prescription-drug entitlement in 2003. In 2006, however, he found himself on the receiving end of wildly intemperate blasts of scorn, contempt, rage, and disgust, and his own party killed the bill.

By November, going into the election, the GOP was divided, weakened, and disheartened. Had the Iraq war gone differently, none of this would have been the case.

One way of seeing how failure to win in Iraq—not the fact of the war itself—was the primary cause of the political change in 2006 is by observing the behavior of the victorious Democrats. Immediately upon assuming power, their leaders in the House and Senate began advancing legislative proposals to compel some kind of pullback of American forces. In the House of Representatives, the one-time hawk John Murtha championed a measure putting partial controls on further deployments. But this, according to the *Washington Post*, frightened freshman Democrats from districts where Bush had carried the day in 2004. And so, under the disappointed direction of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the Murtha controls devolved into recommendations and then vanished altogether.

In March 2007, the Democratic-led Senate voted 50-48 to attach a requirement to an Iraq funding bill mandating an American withdrawal from Iraq by the end of March 2008—and then, two months later, it removed that mandate from the final piece of legislation. Something similar

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happened with a House proposal to compel a withdrawal by the end of August 2008. And on it went for the balance of 2007, as Democrats failed again and again to limit the American mission in Iraq.

What had happened? If the results of the 2006 election had indeed been a straightforward mandate for the Democratic view that "this war is lost" (as Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid would put it in April 2007), legislation sent from Capitol Hill to the White House would have reflected that conviction. Democrats from Bush districts would not have objected, and fearful Republicans would have crossed party lines to side with their Democratic colleagues. That is what occurs when an issue has a mandate.

Yet Democrats could not get a single withdrawal proposal through the legislative process to the President's desk. What is more, their efforts to do so have endeared them to no one: neither disaffected independents, nor depressed Republicans, nor liberals crying for Bush's head. To the contrary: according to polls, the present Democratic leadership in Congress is the object of an icy public scorn several degrees cooler even than the permafrost in which George W. Bush has been embalmed.

So Republicans are not the only political actors who have ventured onto the 2008 stage in a state of confusion, unsure of their lines. Democrats, whom one might have expected to be exhilarated by the disfavor into which their rivals have fallen, are suffering from a bit of vertigo themselves, unsettled by the discovery that antipathy toward the Republicans has not spared them, either. When it comes to Iraq, they, too, appear to be at cross-purposes with a substantial body of American public opinion.

Clearly, something happened between the time the Democrats won in 2006 and the time they took over at the beginning of 2007 to account for this disarray. That something was the President's decision to change strategy. Although he explained the Iraq "surge" in relatively modest terms—as a means of imposing security in Baghdad in order to give the nascent political system a chance to work—this was the first actual "strategy for victory" he had ever put before the American people. It was based on the notion that there was an identifiable, organized enemy fighting on two fronts with a strategy of its own, and that this enemy could be confronted and defeated through American military action.

Absent the surge strategy and the new way forward that it offered, Democrats would probably have prevailed on their declared intention to force a pullback from Iraq in 2007. There was no way Republicans could or would have stood their ground beside their President if he had simply persisted in carrying on as if no change of strategy were necessary. It was either pull back or move forward. Bush chose the latter—to the consternation of Democrats and, be it noted, also over the objections of many of his own closest advisers. As Fred Barnes has written in the *Weekly Standard*:

> Inside his own administration, Bush had few allies on a surge in Iraq aside from the Vice President and a coterie of National Security Council staffers. The Joint Chiefs were disinclined to send more troops to Iraq or adopt a new strategy. So were General George Casey, the American commander in Iraq, and Centcom commander John Abizaid. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice favored a troop pullback.

BUSH WOULD describe the repudiation of the Republicans in the 2006 midterm election as a "thumpin'." To the extent that it motivated him to act, the thumpin' was an invaluable, if painful, message from his own constituents, delivered the only way they could to a President in the middle of his second term. Democrats read into it what they wished to, and got it wrong. But no less wrong were those Republicans and conservatives who placed the blame for the thumpin' on the wasteful conduct of Congress and the passage of domestic legislation they did not like. Even John McCain, whose presidential candidacy was rescued from oblivion by the success of the surge, has continued to miss this point. "Republicans lost the 2006 election not over the war in Iraq," he repeated in a January debate in California, "but over spending. Our base became disheartened."

It is a great irony that the best political news for Republicans in a notably unfavorable election year—with the public telling pollsters that it is desirous of change and prefers Democratic stands on most issues by margins ranging from ten to twenty points—may come out of Iraq. Should the surge's progress continue and deepen, the Democratic nominee may find himself or herself in a very uncomfortable position come autumn. The Democratic base will not have changed its mind about the war's evil, and it will not be happy with a leader who does. So the nominee will find it almost impossible to embrace the surge, and certainly not after having disparaged it caustically in the past. But if the nominee does not embrace the real possibility of victory in Iraq, he or she will run the risk of appearing defeatist, or worse, in the eyes of the

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same independent voters who fled the GOP in droves in 2006.

Meanwhile, the candidate most associated with the surge, John McCain, will (assuming he becomes the nominee of the Republican party) be uniquely well situated to deploy an accusation he has been leveling at the Democratic frontrunners for nearly a year. "I was very disappointed to see Senator Obama and Senator Clinton embrace the policy of surrender by voting against funds to support our brave men and women fighting in Iraq," McCain said about a vote the two Democrats cast in May 2007. He called this "the equivalent of waving a white flag of surrender to al Qaeda."

As his campaign took off in January 2008, McCain sharpened the dagger:

> Candidate Clinton has called for surrender and waving the white flag. I think it's terrible. I think it's terrible. . . . For us to do what Senator Clinton wants us to do—that is to wave the white flag—I cannot guarantee United States security in the region or in the United States.

This is the ground—as tribunes of an American victory in Iraq—on which Republicans will have no choice but to stand in November 2008. They may not be able to prevail with it, but they have no hope of prevailing without it.

—February 6, 2008

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When Jihad Came to America

Andrew C. McCarthy

On May 2 and 3, 1990, the U.S. embassy in Cairo alerted its counterpart in Khartoum that Egypt's "leading radical," Omar Abdel Rahman, was on his way to Sudan. Warning that his ultimate plan might be to seek exile in the United States, the Cairo embassy asked its colleagues to pass along any information they might learn about his activities on Sudanese soil.

What did U.S. officials already know about Abdel Rahman in 1990? As the 9/11 Commission would later determine, they knew that he

> had been arrested repeatedly in Egypt between 1985 and 1989 for attempting to take over mosques, inciting violence, attacking police officers, and demonstrating illegally, and that he had been imprisoned and placed under house arrest until he left Egypt for Sudan.

And yet when, immediately upon arriving in Sudan, Abdel Rahman made application at the American embassy for a multiple-entry visa to the United States, the document was issued to him within a week.

Visa in hand, Abdel Rahman—then fifty-two years old and sightless from a case of childhood diabetes, which had led to his being dubbed the "blind sheikh"—relocated to the United States on July 18, 1990. He first took up residence in a house in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, then settled in an apartment across the Hudson in Jersey City, New Jersey. In December 1990, fully six months after first learning that it had issued the visa in error, the State Department revoked it. By then, however, Abdel Rahman had exited and re-entered the United States on three occasions—one of them six days *after* the visa's revocation, when he avoided detection by employing a slight variation on the spelling of his name.

At the start of 1991, the New York office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) began an investigation to determine whether grounds existed to deport Abdel Rahman for fraud in the acquisition of his visa. At almost exactly the same moment, he officially sought permanent resident-alien status as a "Special Immigrant, Religious Teacher." Incredibly, the INS responded by granting his request and issuing him a coveted "green card" on April 8. It seems that, unbeknownst to the INS office in New York where he was being investigated, Abdel Rahman had applied for this upgrade in status in Newark, New Jersey. By the time he once again sought to re-enter the United States in July 1991, the authorities could detain him only briefly before letting him back in. After all, he was now a permanent resident.

As is well known, the blind sheikh would be the

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motive force behind the first effort to bring down the World Trade Center buildings, the bombing that killed six adults, one of them a woman well along in pregnancy, and wounded hundreds more in February 1993. I led the team of prosecutors who in 1995 successfully convicted him and nine others for that conspiracy.

But this was not the first terrorist act on American soil for which he bore some responsibility. It was preceded, only months after his arrival, by the assassination of the radical Jewish activist Meir Kahane. Had American authorities understood the significance of this murder, connected it to what they already knew about Abdel Rahman's burgeoning activities in America, and worked to mine the reams of evidence left by Kahane's assassin in his car and home, they would have gathered the information necessary to break up a terrorist ring in its relative infancy and thereby prevent the 1993 bombing—and, perhaps, much else that was to follow.

That is not what happened.

Omar Abdel Rahman's arrival in New York in July 1990 lit a fuse to the city's nascent but already functioning jihadist community. He went to work right away. It was time, the sheikh exhorted his flock in Brooklyn and Jersey City, to stop pretending that the challenge for Muslims lay elsewhere in the world. The challenge lay right here in the United States. This country, he preached, was "the big evil," the "fiercest enemy of Islam," and the real power behind not only the Middle East interloper Israel but such secular Islamic governments as Hosni Mubarak's Egypt.

Sheikh Omar pilloried his followers for their empty talk, talk, talk about jihad. He wanted the real thing. A tireless booster of Hamas and of the effort to funnel funds to the terrorist group Palestinian Islamic Jihad, he traveled the world to raise money and fighters for the Afghan *mujahideen* and for militant Muslims in Bosnia.

In his exhortations to his American followers, the blind sheikh cautioned against recklessness. "Child's play," he counseled, was to be avoided, and resources should be marshaled for deeds of greater impact. Next to the murder of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981, his favorite example of an effective jihadist operation was Hizballah's strike against the United States Marines in Lebanon in 1983. But the main point was this: one way or another, it was time to wage jihad in, and against, America.

Among those listening closely to Abdel Rahman's words was a thirty-four-year-old Egyptian-born immigrant named Sayyid Nosair. An engineer by education and by trade, Nosair was now working as a maintenance technician at the criminal court in lower Manhattan. More significantly, he was already known in jihadist circles as the "emir of marksmanship," working to build the Egyptian sheikh's American cell.

The cell's headquarters, a Brooklyn mosque, had come to the FBI's attention in the late 1980's because of potential violations of the Neutrality Act, which prohibits people inside our borders from making war against countries with which the U.S. is at peace. Officially, America was not in a state of armed hostilities with the Soviet Union or with Afghanistan, though covertly (through the Pakistani intelligence service) the CIA was arming the Afghan *mujahideen* in their struggle against the Russians. The FBI suspected the mosque was a hub for the international effort to recruit young Muslims to fight in Afghanistan—and so, in essence, the FBI was investigating as a potential violation that which the CIA was indirectly facilitating.

The cell, however, had other ideas. It was training its members to become a force capable of conducting jihad operations—bombings, kidnappings, political assassinations—anywhere the cause could be advanced, including the United States. In the summer of 1989, surveillance agents learned the mosque was serving as a weapons depot. On several July weekends, groups of men were seen carrying out boxes, loading them into vehicles, and driving them to a firing range in Calverton, Long Island. The boxes contained various kinds of guns, which the men spent hours shooting in practice drills.

On July 2, for example, Nosair, accompanied by Mahmud Abouhalima and Mohammed Salameh, among others, loaded up some cars near the mosque and drove slowly and warily to Calverton, stopping en route to pray by the side of a road. Upon arriving at the range, they spent the day firing at targets with an array of weapons, from high-powered AK-47 rifles to 9mm semi-automatic pistols. Nearly identical trips occurred over the following weekends, with agents taking dozens of photos of the trainees, including another close Nosair associate named Nidal Ayyad.

The Bureau's surveillance initiative came to an abrupt end on July 23 when Nosair and Abouhalima, leading a group of sixteen men through shooting drills, sensed they were being watched. After dispatching one of their charges to check out a nearby van with darkened windows, Abouhalima led a group that pounded on the vehicle until an agent inside responded. Confronting him, they complained that they were being subjected to ha-

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rassment based on religious bias. The investigation ground to a halt.

The training, of course, did not. And it was far more extensive than the sessions at Calverton, involving weekend-long exercises at remote outposts and featuring experimentation in explosives and assault tactics. Nosair and Abouhalima would report to the blind sheikh, then still in Egypt, about the training and other developments in overseas telephone calls that Nosair recorded, playing them aloud at the mosque to promote recruiting.

Nosair's other conversations with Abdel Rahman were similarly illuminating. For example, in the year before the cleric moved to the U.S., the two men commiserated by phone over the Mubarak regime's programmatic encouragement of birth control in poverty-stricken Egypt. This initiative, they complained to each other, was especially poorly timed just as Soviet Jews were stepping up the pace of emigration to "Palestine." Mubarak, they concluded, was shoring up Jewish control of the region.

AT THE TIME, the most radical proponent of Jewish migration to Israel was Rabbi Meir Kahane, who in the late 1960's had founded the Jewish Defense League (JDL) in New York. The JDL had been responsible for several terrorist attacks against Soviet targets in the United States, attacks ostensibly aimed at coercing the Soviets to free Russian Jews to move to Israel. After emigrating to Israel himself, Kahane was elected to the Knesset, occupying a seat until the late 1980's when his party, Kach, was disbarred for anti-Arab racism. (Among other things, Kahane had called for the expulsion of non-Jews from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.)

During October and November 1990, Kahane embarked on a speaking tour of the United States. On the evening of November 5, he appeared in a ballroom at the Marriott Hotel in midtown Manhattan. Fifty or sixty people were in attendance for the two-hour lecture, including Nosair and two associates: Mohammed Salameh and Bilal Alkasi.

At the conclusion of his speech, Kahane mingled with audience members near the podium. Nosair approached, concealing a .357 magnum Sturm Ruger revolver, fully loaded with hollow-point rounds, its barrel shortened, the sight filed down (to avoid inadvertent hooking on clothing at the moment of truth), and the serial number obliterated—the trademarks of an assassin. Worming his way into a small knot of people, Nosair suddenly drew from a distance of about seven feet, pumping two shots into Kahane and killing him instantly.

As the onlookers recoiled, Nosair fled, trailed by one of Kahane's retinue. At the rear door, he ran into a plucky septuagenarian, Irving Franklin, who struggled briefly with the assassin until he fired again, striking Franklin in the leg. As Franklin (who would survive) fell bleeding to the floor, Nosair dashed out of the hotel and into the night.

He was almost certainly looking for a particular yellow taxi, the one usually driven by his associate Mahmud Abouhalima. Failing to find it, he randomly picked another, dove into the rear passenger seat, and ordered the driver to step on it, jabbing him in the back of the head with his gun. But his pursuers closed in. At a traffic light, the terrified cabby alighted, gesturing to the back seat. Nosair, gun in hand, bolted.

As he sprinted south on Lexington Avenue, the clock struck 9 p.m.—time for Carlos Acosta, a postal police officer fully garbed in his blue uniform, to close the local post office for the night. Acosta heard the commotion and saw Nosair running in his direction as others gave chase. The officer's training took over. Shifting to present a smaller target, he simultaneously drew his service revolver and identified himself. Nosair blasted from about eight feet away, his first shot striking Acosta in the chest and a second whizzing within inches of his head. Fortunately, the officer was wearing a bullet-proof vest that deflected the chest shot into his right shoulder, causing severe pain and profuse hemorrhaging but nothing worse. He retained enough control to return fire, catching the assailant with a shot to the neck. Nosair fell to the ground, blood pooling at his back, the gun lying at his side. He was rushed to Bellevue Hospital. Though critically wounded, he survived.

In the aftermath, Abdel Rahman refrained from telling his followers outright that he had authorized the murder, but he boldly declared that to have issued a *fatwa* calling for Kahane's death would have been "an honor. . . . We ask Allah . . . that we be worthy to issue a *fatwa* to kill tyrants, oppressors, and infidels."

THE AUTHORITIES in New York City quickly realized they had a powder keg on their hands. Kahane had been a lightning rod—but Nosair, it was clear, was a fanatic. Within four days of the murder, the *New York Times* was describing him as "devoted to strict Muslim religious practices" and as a voracious consumer of Middle East news, a man who at his place of work "would not listen to music and . . . spread out a rug or a piece of plastic

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twice a day . . . to perform his prayers at the appointed hour, . . . often read[ing] the Qur'an during breaks."

It required no intensive scrutiny to grasp that Nosair was part of something much larger than himself—a fact already clear from the detail that, after his capture, someone had deliberately moved the car that had carried him to the hotel. When the car was subsequently located, a notebook was found inside with scribblings of the names of chemical compounds for bomb-making and an elaborate plan to carry out an assault or robbery at a store. The plan included a sketch and instructions:

> 1—When he exits from the car to the store, 2—Block him between two cars front and back and approach him while in his car. 3—Standing beside him in the car and firing upon him, one of the brothers advancing toward [illegible]. 4—Create an accident; one brother hit him from the back and when he goes down to see what happened to his car; he carries out the job.

Three Nosair associates had littered the notebook with their fingerprints: Salameh and Alkasi (the men who accompanied Nosair to the Marriott that night), and Nidal Ayyad (who, like Salameh and Abouhalima, had been seen by the FBI in 1989 at Calverton). Four years later, Salameh, Ayyad, and Abouhalima would be convicted for their participation in the World Trade Center plot. The next year, 1995, Nosair's conviction on terrorism charges relating to the bombing, the Kahane murder, and other crimes would be secured by my trial team.

But back in 1990, evidence of the paramilitary effort, and the evidence recovered from Nosair's car, were somehow not enough to signal a broad conspiracy. Neither, apparently, were the 47 boxes of documents, photographs, ballistics, and other items seized by police searching Nosair's home and locker at work. It would take time to translate much of the Arabic-language evidence that was recovered, but one would have had to go very far out of one's way to miss the plain fact that Nosair was hardly an independent actor.

And yet the authorities went far out of their way to do just that. Long before anything approaching a competent investigation could have gotten to the bottom of things, Joseph Borelli, chief of detectives for the New York City Police Department (NYPD), announced that the shooting had been carried out by a "lone, deranged gunman." As for the FBI, an unidentified official told the *New York Times*: "Either the man is a lone nut. Or he's a lone nut and someone whispered something in his ear knowing he'd do it. Or there's an enormous international conspiracy." With an international conspiracy staring it in the face, the Bureau, too, went with the "lone nut" theory.

A dozen years later, after radical Islamists had finally destroyed the World Trade Center and murdered 3,000 Americans, an embarrassed FBI would blame others for the failure to deal with jihadism in America when it was still relatively young. In testimony to Congress in 2002, FBI officials would claim that the NYPD and Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau had

> resisted attempts to label the Kahane assassination a "conspiracy" despite the apparent links to a broader network of radicals. Instead, these organizations reportedly wanted the appearance of speedy justice and a quick resolution to a volatile situation. By arresting Nosair, they felt they had accomplished both.

This was nonsense. Federal authorities do not, ever, allow themselves to be hemmed in by New York State law-enforcement officials, and nothing had prevented the FBI from pursuing a broader conspiracy angle against Nosair and his fellow jihadists. The Bureau simply decided it was not worth the effort. In December 1990, after a mere six weeks of investigation, the FBI let the *Times* know that it believed "more strongly than ever that Mr. Nosair had acted alone in shooting Rabbi Kahane."

And what about Abdel Rahman? The federal investigators said they regarded his presence in New York "as a tantalizing but possibly meaningless footnote." There was, they claimed, "no evidence that the sheikh had known Mr. Nosair or had ever spoken with him in private." No evidence, that is, other than the cassette tapes seized from Nosair's home that no one had troubled to analyze and that contained recordings of Nosair and Abouhalima bantering with the blind sheikh about paramilitary training for jihad.

After 9/11, Detective Borelli would similarly deny that he had ever instructed his subordinates "not to look at the conspiracy angle." But this, too, was arrant revisionism. At the time, Borelli had painted Nosair as a solitary ne'er-do-well who "was taking a prescription drug for . . . depression." He added: "The impression we're getting is that he had menial jobs here. . . . He couldn't fulfill his potential. He had a serious accident at work that crip-

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pled up his legs. He didn't see any future." The *Times* dutifully talked up the depression story, noting reports that patients on anti-depressants "became far more hostile, despairing, and uncontrollable than they had ever been before" taking them. In other words, Prozac made him do it.

THE TROVE removed from Nosair's house, in addition to gun-related materials and assassination manuals, included sheaves of handwritten notes, mostly but not all in Arabic. Some of these covered procedures and formulas for the manufacture of explosives. In a section entitled "Goals," Nosair noted that in "guerrilla wars"—the kind Abdel Rahman frequently urged—it made more sense to use home-made ammunition than "military ammunition that the police forces use."

Most significant, however, was the extensive notebook Nosair kept on plans and philosophy. "To those against whom war is made," he wrote, "permission is given to fight [back] because they are wronged and verily Allah is most powerful in their aid." He described what he foresaw as a "counter-psychological war against God's enemies for their attempt to demonstrate their might." And, three years before radical jihadists would bomb the World Trade Center, and more than a decade before they would succeed in annihilating it, he wrote of "exploding the structure of their civilized pillars . . . such as the touristic infrastructure which they are proud of and their high world buildings which they are proud of and their statues which they endear and the buildings in which gather their leaders."

For anyone with eyes to see, this "lone, deranged gunman" had, with the murder of Kahane, propelled himself into the pantheon of jihad warriors. This is certainly the way it seemed to the countless members of Abdel Rahman's budding New York militia who would beat a path to Nosair's prison cell. From the moment he was moved to Riker's Island to await trial from the hospital where he had been recuperating from his bullet wound, he was in continuous contact with his associates. Prominent among them was Ibrahim El-Gabrowny, his cousin and chief confidant. El-Gabrowny not only became the coordinator of all jailhouse visits; he also formed the Nosair Defense Committee, raising funds internationally that included a $20,000 contribution from one Osama bin Laden.

Even as he pleaded not-guilty in court to the charge of murder, attempted murder, and weapons offenses, Nosair brazenly used his newfound celebrity to promote fundraising and recruitment for jihad. He made rousing audiotapes, distributed by El-Gabrowny, citing the threat posed by Jewish immigration to "Palestine" and braying that "God the Almighty commanded us to fight" the Israelis. He also sought to stiffen his listeners' resolve with a glorious rendition of his sneak attack on Kahane:

> In New York, God the Almighty enabled His extremely brave people, with His great power, to destroy one of the top infidels. They were preparing him to dominate, to be the prime minister, someday. . . . So, brothers, begin the jihad! Begin the jihad! Begin the jihad! There is no honor without jihad.

Meanwhile, among his confederates, Nosair used the prestige bestowed on him by Kahane's slaying to spur others to act against the United States and the Jews, who, he said, controlled the American government, justice system, and foreign policy. He chided his visitors for "doing nothing," adding the incessant refrain: "I did my part, what are you doing?" After his trial and his incarceration at Attica prison in upstate New York, his specific proposals would include killing the judge in his case. Countering the concern that such an operation would require a sharpshooter, he mimicked an assassin with a pistol held close to the belt, reminding his visitors that "I didn't need to be a sharpshooter."

A YEAR AFTER killing Meir Kahane, Nosair was put on trial. The state had considered the case against him to be so overwhelming that it could afford to paint him as a deranged loner whose motives were irrelevant. But Nosair's lawyer, the notorious radical William Kunstler, exploited this opening to turn the trial into precisely the sort of political spectacle the state was trying to avoid.

In selecting the jury, Kunstler made no bones about the fact that he and Nosair "want[ed] a third-world jury of non-whites, or anyone who's been pushed down by a white society." On December 21, 1991, after five weeks of tendentious testimony, the jury they had selected brought unbridled elation to a courtroom throng of Islamic activists. Stunningly, and quite incoherently, the jurors cleared Nosair of both the homicide of Kahane and the attempted murders of Irving Franklin and Carlos Acosta, even as they found him guilty of the lesser charges of assault and coercion in the course of the very shootings from which they exonerated him, and of unlawful possession of the firearm that was proved beyond cavil to have been fired at all three victims.

An undercover FBI informant named Emad Salem was among those invited to a victory celebra-

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tion the following day at the Abu Bakr mosque in Brooklyn. Given the mood, no one seemed to mind that Salem was videotaping the festivities, like a wedding photographer preserving the moment for posterity. Thus were Mohammed Salameh, Nidal Ayyad, and other future conspirators in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing captured in full revelry.

True, Nosair was not yet out of the woods: sentencing still had to be pronounced, and the weapons offenses carried potentially serious penalties. But, the celebrants reasoned, his acquittal on the major charges meant that the judge would have to go light. America had a jury system, and the jury had spoken. Their "champion" would soon be back in the fold.

About this they turned out to be wrong. Judge Alvin Schlesinger, who had presided over the circus of a trial, castigated the jury's findings as "against the overwhelming weight of evidence and . . . devoid of common sense and logic." On January 29, 1992, he imposed the maximum sentence: seven-and-one-third to twenty-two years' imprisonment. In a blatant message to the parole board, he also made it clear that if there were a legal way to lock the cell door and throw away the key, he would do so. Nosair, he said, had "conducted a rape of this country, of our Constitution and of our laws, and of people seeking to exist peacefully together."

Miserable and enraged, the champion was banished to the wasteland of Attica to serve what promised to be a very long stretch. It was a bitter pill for his friends to swallow. Nosair, a hero for killing Kahane, and touched by the grace of Allah in being acquitted of the murder he had unquestionably committed, had now become the victim of a despicably unjust sentence.

Salem, the FBI informant, adroitly capitalized on the fever pervading the jihadists. Equipped with military training, he had been indispensable to El-Gabrowny in setting up a security perimeter for the Muslims at the rambunctious courtroom sentencing (there was constant fighting at the trial between Kahane supporters and Muslim activists), and he soon found himself welcomed into Abdel Rahman's New Jersey home. There, the blind sheikh registered his special pleasure that Salem was helping restart the paramilitary training of jihadists that had been dormant since Nosair's arrest. The time was coming, Sheikh Omar declared with pregnant emphasis, "when all would need to be trained."

And so they were. Their worldwide company would include Nosair's friends Salameh, Ayyad, and Abouhalima, all of whom took occasional time-outs from constructing the World Trade Center bomb to make the trek to Attica for consultations with Kahane's assassin. It would also include the nineteen men trained to hijack planes simultaneously and use them as missiles on September 11, 2001—trained in this case not by the blind sheikh but by the organization run by Osama bin Laden, the man who a decade earlier had contributed $20,000 to the Sayyid Nosair Defense Fund and who would publicly credit the blind sheikh, by then languishing in an American prison, with issuing the *fatwa* authorizing the 9/11 attacks.

Would a successful interdiction of Kahane's murderer, or swift and thorough investigation of Abdel Rahman's circle in its aftermath, have prevented the monstrous deeds of subsequent years? That is of course unknowable. But an aggressive effort by United States authorities would have indicated a seriousness of purpose toward the threat of Islamic terrorism that itself might have changed the story of our times for the better. We still live, and will continue to live, with the consequences of our own blindness.

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The End of the Chinese Miracle?

Gordon G. Chang

In his recent book, *The Age of Turbulence*, Alan Greenspan identifies the only nation that, in his view, can challenge the United States for world economic leadership a quarter-century from now. That country is China. Yet by each of the criteria that Greenspan himself considers crucial to economic success—property rights, representative governance, and the rule of law, to name the most important—China scores poorly or worse. Thus, the question raised inadvertently by Greenspan's book is whether China's effort to overtake the dominant position of the United States in the world economy can continue to coexist with the country's overall political framework.

So far, China's performance alone would seem to vindicate Greenspan's prediction. Since Deng Xiaoping's ascension to power in 1978 and the beginning of the period of economic reform, the Chinese gross domestic product (GDP) has grown at an average annual rate of 9.8 percent according to official statistics. What is more, the rate of growth seems to be accelerating. Official indications are that GDP jumped by 10.2 percent in 2005, by 11.1 percent in 2006, and by 11.4 percent in 2007.

Astonishing figures like these have led the economist Jeffrey Sachs to declare China "the most successful development story in world history," and Bill Gates to predict that the Chinese economy will overtake ours sooner rather than later. What is more, China's economic success is now seen to be a *result* of its unique mix of totalitarian and authoritarian policies—policies that are at the heart of the so-called "Beijing Consensus." Whereas conventional wisdom holds that, in the words of the China expert Andrew Nathan, "authoritarian systems are inherently fragile" and inimical to prosperity, "this particular authoritarian system . . . has proved resilient."

Will it continue to manifest such resilience? China's Communist party has created growth by grafting free-market mechanisms onto a Marxist structure—an experiment with few parallels in history. It has done so mainly by means of its decades-long program of *gaige kaifang*, "reform and opening to the outside world." The growth we see today is in most respects the payoff from that earlier reform. But what about tomorrow? Can China's current political system undertake the further reforms necessary to move forward? And if not, what then?

After seizing control of China in 1949, Mao Zedong nationalized the country's industry, collectivized its agriculture, built a Soviet-style command economy, and nearly destroyed China twice—once starting in the late 1950's with the Great Leap Forward and then again during the

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decade-long Cultural Revolution, which ended with Mao's death in 1976. Although his successors mostly agreed on the need to modernize the rigid economy, they could not come together on how. Progress arrived only when Deng Xiaoping grabbed power from the now-forgotten Hua Guofeng and built a coalition that sponsored tentative reforms, first in the countryside and then in cities. What the party would not or could not do, the Chinese people proceeded to do on their own, often implementing change ahead of Beijing's cautious technocrats and retrograde ideologues.

No great reformer in history has been able to control the pace and progress of change, and not even Deng, a clever and wily man, was an exception. He lost his grip in the late 1980's as inflation fueled discontent and discontent fueled larger and larger protests, notably in the capital. A believer in economic experimentation, Deng was no experimenter in politics: he insisted on maintaining the party's absolute monopoly on power. Nor, at least initially, did the protesters during the "Beijing Spring" of 1989 challenge this point. But they did exhibit an assertiveness that was inherently threatening, and the result was a massacre in Tiananmen Square that horrified the world.

Tiananmen brought home to Deng the simple truth that, if the Communist party meant to continue to rule China, it had to engineer an enduring prosperity. After two years spent weathering the world's indignation, he made rapid reform the official policy of the party. As he put it, "Slow growth isn't socialism."

Today, China does not have slow growth. Many foreign observers believe it does not even have socialism. "It's capitalism at full speed," averred Bill Gates at Davos in 2004. But Gates is wrong. The Chinese economy has indeed been moving at full speed, but it is by no means a free-market economy. Instead, it is guided and sometimes controlled by tens of thousands of central and local government technocrats who, among many other things, determine the prices of crucial inputs (for instance, land, labor, and energy), fix final consumer prices, and administer a gigantic program of manufacturing subsidies.

The technocrats also manage the large, state-owned enterprises that control such "pillar industries" as automobiles, telecommunications, steel, and petrochemicals. Encouraging foreigners like Bill Gates to provide capital, technology, and know-how to help rejuvenate state industry, they have worked no less hard to keep control in the hands of the state. At the same time, they mostly restrict domestic Chinese entrepreneurs to smaller-scale businesses that are considered nonessential.

"Socialism with Chinese characteristics"—another Deng phrase—has thus turned out to be a fragmented system, with distinct economies existing side by side. There are several private sectors, all of them vibrant, and a large state-owned one that after three decades of almost constant restructuring is only semi-reformed and has compiled a lackluster record at best. Even though the state sector has a call on about 70 percent of the loans in the banking system and almost exclusive access to the equity and debt markets, state enterprises produce only about a third of China's non-agricultural output. The stunning growth numbers issued by Beijing's National Bureau of Statistics are essentially averages, produced by superheated private-sector output weighed down by mostly mediocre state results. If it were not for monopoly profits and government spending, state-sector growth would be even less impressive.

In brief, the party's insistence on retaining a socialist framework for the Chinese economy has, if anything, held the country back. As the *Financial Times* columnist Martin Wolf observes, Chinese growth has been markedly slower than that experienced by Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan in their initial expansionary phases. China could have—and should have—done better.

In the meantime, and whatever the final economic balance sheet may reveal, it is undeniable that the party's economic restructuring has had a profound effect on Chinese society. With very few exceptions, peasants no longer slave away on collective farms but work their own plots and are responsible for their own livelihoods. Workers, even those employed by state enterprises, are rarely cocooned in company towns, as they once were. Most importantly, the old mechanisms of social control, epitomized by work-and-neighborhood units that monitored and directed virtually every detail of daily life, have largely lapsed. By now, Beijing has gone to the opposite extreme, dismantling the cradle-to-grave social system that was the hallmark of Maoism; the Chinese government now provides far fewer social services than do most Western democracies.

True, the state still exercises restraints on its citizens' behavior, but many of these, too, are flouted, including the hated one-child rule and the bans on various forms of student dancing. And although Beijing still censors, imprisons, and intimidates, it is engaged in a struggle in which it can never claim

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final victory. In the words of Robert Suettinger, who served in the Bush, Sr. and Clinton administrations, China's leaders "are struggling to keep up with a society that is changing in a direction and at a speed they cannot fully control."

The party's loss of control over the Chinese people—the direct result of three decades of economic change—has led to insecurity and fearfulness in the senior leadership. And this fear, in turn, has resulted in a pronounced slowdown in the pace of economic reform, first noticeable during the tenure of Deng's successor Jiang Zemin and more evident today under Hu Jintao. According to the analyst Minxin Pei of the Carnegie Endowment, the government is in a "trapped transition," or a "partial reform equilibrium." Although officials announce economic adjustments almost daily, many of these, especially the new restrictions on foreign business imposed during the last year and a half, can hardly be considered reforms. For the rest, the government is only tinkering and marking time.

It can afford to do this thanks to a sweet spot of growth in the economic cycle. This began in 1998 when Zhu Rongji, Jiang's premier, embarked on a massive government spending spree in an attempt to grow China's way out of what Zhu called an impending "collapse." That fiscal-stimulus program continues to this day. Last year, state spending accounted for about a quarter of the total official economic output.

This cannot go on indefinitely. No government, China's least of all, can efficiently direct the use of capital over time. As more and more yuan chase fewer and fewer viable opportunities and produce less and less growth, Beijing's fiscal stimulus has become progressively wasteful. It has also severely aggravated already existing imbalances. Beijing's debt is about three times the internationally recognized alarm level of 60 percent of GDP, and the government is constantly adding to the amount. Today, for instance, there may be as much as $1.2 trillion in bad and questionable debt, much of it undisclosed, on the books of the state banks and the central government.

Beijing is also manipulating the value of its currency. Until July 2005, the central government pegged the yuan to the dollar to obtain a trade advantage for China's exports. Now it permits a heavily managed float, the result of which has been a massive influx of foreign currency. When converted into yuan, this has led to unmanageable increases in the domestic money supply, causing runaway inflation and the recent stock-market and housing bubbles. Last year's inflation rate, preliminarily estimated at 4.8 percent, was the highest since 1996, and the official figure is undoubtedly understated.

THE OBVIOUS alternative to these distorting policies, and the only path to enduring prosperity, is to pursue genuine reform. It is unlikely, however, that the Chinese government can or will take that route. The reasons are various.

For one thing, establishing a true market economy requires the rule of law, which in turn requires institutional restraints on government. Yet the Communist party insists on remaining above the law. Senior leaders are fond of talking about rule *by* law and, more bizarrely, rule of virtue; both are incompatible with the establishment of the institutions necessary for a modern economy.

Another thing that makes reform exceedingly difficult is the corruption that infests Chinese society and officialdom. The party has been trying to fight this cancer for decades, yet despite a seemingly endless series of show campaigns, it has proved utterly incapable of stemming bureaucratic and political graft. There will be progress only when two unlikely things happen. First, independent prosecutors must be able to pursue senior officials and try them in impartial courts—something that will not occur so long as the party refuses to subject itself to the rule of law and the supervision of the ballot box. And second, the tollgate position in the economy occupied by bureaucrats must be eliminated, something that these newly rich apparatchiks have so far been able to prevent.

The late party statesman Chen Yun perfectly summed up the fundamental dilemma in this area: "Not fighting corruption would destroy the country; fighting it would destroy the party." China has made its choice. As the plague has worsened, especially under Hu Jintao, reform has slowed; as reform has slowed, the plague has worsened.

Nor is the party capable of carrying out another necessary reform: eliminating the role of state enterprises. In the past, Beijing sold off, merged, or closed tens of thousands of these businesses. Now it has announced plans to shrink the number controlled by the central government from 152 to as few as 80 by 2010. Yet, at the same time, it is stepping up its efforts to turn the remaining enterprises into "national champions," with dominant market positions in their respective industries, and it is increasing its ownership share in them.

Last year, the official *People's Daily* reported that the government would assume "absolute control" of seven "lifeline" industries. In August, Beijing's newly formed sovereign-wealth fund, China In-

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vestment Corp., indicated that it would probably spend some of its $200 billion to buy stakes in at least sixteen large firms. And, in still another instance of re-nationalization, the Social Security Fund has been investing increasingly larger portions of its assets in publicly listed stocks of domestic enterprises. The numbers of state-controlled industries may or may not shrink; the degree of state control seems set to rise.

Will the party compensate by tolerating more development of the various private sectors? That too appears unlikely. After opening its doors to domestic entrepreneurs a half-decade ago, Chinese leaders have become fearful of their growing economic power and have increasingly discriminated against private domestic and in favor of foreign sources of capital. The party has also systematically inserted its operatives into non-state businesses, creating cells that now claim three million private-sector members.

For all its organizational efforts, however, there is little evidence that the party has gained much influence over this sector. Moreover, there has been virtually no party penetration of China's numerous underground businesses. In short, the party now has little ability to manipulate the healthiest parts of the economy to its advantage.

But the fundamental problem is this: the party is attempting to reform a system that is essentially unreformable. "If you are going to have socialism, then as a matter of principle you can't have a free market," notes Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew, otherwise known for his admiration of Beijing-style development. Socialism, as Joshua Muravchik has shown in *Heaven on Earth*, has never worked well for more than a generation in any community, large or small. After three decades of change, almost all the easy reforms have been implemented in China. Most of the remaining ones, if seriously undertaken, would spell the downfall of the regime, and for that reason alone the party will not and cannot put them in place.

Speaking about Soviet Communism in the early 1980's, Ronald Reagan observed that "what we see here is a political structure that no longer corresponds to its economic base, a society where productive forces are hampered by political ones." The same applies to China today, in spades. Because Beijing cannot confront the gap between politics and economics, it cannot tackle difficult problems, take on vested interests, or force structural change. Nor can it speak plainly to the Chinese people or even discuss matters candidly within its own ranks. As Zhong Dajun, a Beijing economist, has written of the resulting paralysis: "These are problems that are too important to avoid but too sensitive to face up to, so they are dealt with by vagaries."

And China certainly has no shortage of tough problems. One pressing problem is its need of approximately $1 trillion to fund social-security obligations—a figure that does not include the cost of education, health care, or any of the other essential services that the central government no longer provides. Another is the fallout from the toy, toothpaste, and tire scandals, in response to which the party flailingly imposed death sentences on a few unlucky officials, jailed reporters, levied retaliatory bans on imported items, and declared with a straight face that its four-month "special war" against dangerous products and food was a "complete success." Still another problem, perhaps the most difficult Beijing confronts, is the severely degraded environment, the horrific manifestations of which have provided much fodder for Western journalists covering preparations for this year's Olympics.

All of these problems are the byproducts of economic growth. None can be systematically addressed, because the party fears that doing so would slow an economy whose momentum—now that Communism itself is a creed that no one believes in—constitutes the main basis of its legitimacy.

The irony is that, in some ways, the challenges now facing China are less difficult to surmount than those of the past: the famine during the Great Leap Forward, the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, popular resentment following the butchery in Tiananmen Square. Yet there is a critical difference between those times and these. For better or worse, China's former leaders, especially Mao and Deng, were capable of great boldness. Today, the lifeless officials who populate China's bureaucracy are the products of a system specifically designed to prevent the emergence of a potential Mao or Deng, let alone a budding Mikhail Gorbachev—the Soviet leader whom Beijing blames for Communism's collapse. In their obsession to avoid a USSR-type disintegration, the nine men who run China from their perch on the all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee have ensured that only Brezhnevs, Andropovs, and Chernenkos will succeed them.

From the fall of the Soviet Union, China's leaders have gleaned the lesson that reform must be undertaken very slowly lest it shock the system be-

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yond repair. But the real lesson of the fall of the Soviet Union is otherwise—namely, that when necessary reform is delayed too long, radical political transformation becomes all but inevitable. China, as Harvard's Ross Terrill has observed, can drive off the cliff at slow as well as at full speed.

At some level, China's leaders understand all this. Last March, Premier Wen Jiabao used "four uns" to describe the Chinese economy: "unstable, unbalanced, uncoordinated, and unsustainable." He deserves credit for saying it out loud. But then, instead of taking action, Wen and Hu Jintao largely retreated into the sloganeering of the past. They are now in the midst of a long-term campaign to revive the reputation of Mao Zedong and the vocabulary of Marxism. The "scientific outlook on development," a nonsensical concept, has been written into the party's charter at Hu's insistence, and "harmonious society" has become the latest buzz term—signs of a political leadership that has run out of ideas and can now only futilely demand obedience from an increasingly restive citizenry.

Westerners dazzled by China's economic growth tend to ignore such ideological straws in the wind. But the next chapter in the history of the Chinese people is being written, and it is bound to upset many a confident assessment of the country's present and many a grand prediction of its future.

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Mysteries of the Menorah

Meir Soloveichik

In 2004, the two chief rabbis of Israel, Shlomo Amar and Yonah Metzger, traveled to the Vatican for a historic meeting with Pope John Paul II. An ambitious interfaith agenda had been planned for the encounter, but Rabbi Amar had more on his mind than religious dialogue. "I could not resist," he told Israeli radio. "I asked them about the Temple vessels and the menorah." In so doing, Rabbi Amar reflected a belief common among many Jews: that the solid-gold candelabrum taken by the Roman ravagers of ancient Jerusalem remains in the city that was once the heart of the empire.

There is, scholars have noted, no reason to think that the Vatican has been hiding the candelabrum these many centuries. All sources indicate that the seized Temple treasures were originally displayed by the Roman conquerors in an edifice called (in an antique instance of Orwellian usage) the "Temple of Peace." The vessels were then taken from Rome when the city was plundered by the Goths in the 5th century C.E. The Vatican itself vehemently denies having any knowledge of the menorah's whereabouts.

And yet "my heart tells me this is not the truth," responds Rabbi Amar. Nor is he the only religious Jew whose heart dwells in longing memory both on the menorah and on the Temple from which its light once radiated to the world. Today, the site where the menorah proudly stood is an area physically empty of Jews, a fact commemorated every year on the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av: the day on which, according to tradition, the First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E. and, half a millennium later, the even more magnificent Second Temple was sacked and burned by the Romans in 70 C.E.

To be sure, one might respond to the rabbi's plea by noting that, although the physical object has indeed been lost to history, in another sense the menorah has indeed returned to the Jewish people. After all, the displacement of the menorah to Rome is inextricably associated with the most famous visual image of the Temple's destruction: the still-standing arch of triumph erected by the victorious emperor Titus along the road to the Roman Forum. The original pagan inscription on this edifice, whose pediment depicts the victory parade of the Roman forces and their train of spoils, proclaims its dedication "to the divine Titus Vespasianus Augustus, son of the divine Vespasian."

Nor was it only Rome's emperor-worshipping pagans who saw a cosmic significance in the conquest of Jerusalem. To the Christian Church, the destruction of the Temple served as an ultimate sign that the Jews were no longer God's chosen people, divine favor having now been transferred to a newer and better Israel. As recently as 1821, a plaque on the other side of the arch notes, Pope

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Pius VII ordered the rehabilitation of this monument, so "remarkable in terms of both religion and art."

But today the Jews have returned to Jerusalem, and their sovereignty over the Holy Land has been restored. The work commemorated by the arch has, it would seem, been undone. Indeed, it was to underline this thrilling transformation that, in the late 1940's, the nascent state of Israel chose the menorah depicted on the arch of Titus as *its* symbol. Alec Mishory, an Israeli art historian, explains the rationale:

> The menorah is returned from the arch of Titus, where it symbolizes defeat, humiliation, and disgrace, and is installed in a place of honor on the emblem of the state, the establishment of which is testimony to the eternity of the Jewish people.

But if the menorah has indeed been returned, and if the defeat wrought by Titus has been reversed, why then do observant Jews continue to mourn what Titus brought about? Why does the ninth of Av, which embodies the twin ideas of exile and dispersion, need to be observed at all?

In answering this question we need to examine the enigmatic image of the menorah more closely, and revisit a mystery that has confounded many over the centuries.

WE KNOW a great deal about the configuration of the menorah from the biblical book of Exodus. Beaten out of solid gold, the ancient candelabrum boasted six branches emerging from a seventh, its central shaft. The menorah was adorned with golden buttons, cups, and flowers.

What goes unmentioned in the Bible is the menorah's foundation: how it was supported. Halakhic tradition long insisted that it stood on a three-legged base, and this has been confirmed by archeological evidence. Throughout the land of Israel and the early Diaspora, painted and etched images of the menorah have been discovered dating to the first century C.E. and immediately thereafter; virtually everywhere the base is discernible, it is a tripod.

An exception, however, is the most famous image of all: the one on the arch of Titus. There, Rome's triumphant soldiers are carrying a menorah mounted on a large stepped pedestal.

The mystery is still deeper. Studying the image on the arch, one can discern dragons or sea serpents adorning the steps of the pedestal—just the sort of pagan art that Jewish sages singled out as associated with idolatry. "If one finds vessels," we are told in the Talmud, "upon which are the forms of a sun, or a moon, or a dragon, let him throw them into the Dead Sea." Pillars decorated with dragons virtually identical to those on the menorah's pedestal have been discovered in the Roman temple at Didyma in southern Turkey. It beggars belief that the Temple candelabrum would have incorporated such a fundamentally pagan aesthetic.

Several answers have been offered to these conundrums. According to some, a stepped pedestal was in fact a more customary motif than has been thought. Others have speculated that, at some point after the Temple's destruction, a pedestal was substituted for the original tripod. Thus, Rabbi Isaac Herzog, the first chief rabbi of Israel and an astute scholar in his own right, suggested that the base must have broken off during the return voyage from Judea, to be replaced with a pedestal of Roman design in preparation for the procession into the city.

But perhaps the most interesting theory has been put forward by the Israeli scholar Daniel Sperber, who has proposed that the menorah had *already* been altered from its authentically original design by the time of the Temple's destruction. Noting the basic similarity of the dragons on the arch to those on the temple at Didyma, Sperber points to a significant difference: unlike the sea-dragons on the menorah, those at Didyma are ridden by naked nymphs. Perhaps, he suggests, the new pedestal was the brainchild of someone eager to introduce a pagan motif into the Temple while at the same time remaining nominally sensitive to Jewish concerns.

Who might that have been? The perfect culprit is the man who has served as a villain in both the Jewish and Christian traditions: King Herod, the Idumean dictator and client of Rome who ruled Jerusalem around the time of the birth of Jesus.

Herod's relationship with the Temple was a complex one. On the one hand, all contemporary sources, including the rabbis of the Mishnah, agree that he oversaw a stupendous refurbishing of the Temple Mount, elevating its architectural status into an eighth wonder of the ancient world. On the other hand, the contemporaneous historian Josephus recorded the king's efforts to Romanize the Temple, as well as the outrage this sparked among his subjects:

> For the king had erected over the great gate of the Temple a large golden eagle, of great value, and had dedicated it to the Temple. Now the law forbids those that propose to live according to it to erect images or representations of

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> any living creature. So these wise men persuaded [their followers] to pull down the golden eagle; alleging that although they should incur any danger which might bring them to their deaths, the virtue of the action now proposed to them would appear much more advantageous to them than the pleasures of life.

In suggesting that the same Herod who could bring an eagle into the Temple might also have placed dragons on the menorah, Sperber observes that during the reign of an earlier king, Antigonus, the city of Jerusalem had been plundered by Parthians. There is no question, he writes, that the vessels of the Temple were damaged in the process. And so, "when Herod came to restore the Temple, and to fix its vessels, he was presented with the opportunity to create a new foundation [for the menorah] in the style of the temple of Didyma, with symbols taken from the altar of Apollo."

If Sperber is right about this, it might explain the profusion of images of the authentic menorah—devoid of dragons, and with a clearly defined tripod base—drawn and scrawled over Jewish walls and floors in the Holy Land and the Diaspora in the days before and after the Temple's destruction. As Sperber concludes, drawing such a menorah would have been an act of defiance against Rome and all it stood for, as well as a profound expression of longing for the day when Judaism, and Judaism alone, would dictate how the God of Israel was worshipped in Jerusalem.

WITH THIS in mind we can return to the emblem of the modern state of Israel, chosen in order to emphasize the restoration of Jewish sovereignty. As it happens, much debate surrounded the precise configuration of this artifact. Among the proposals submitted at the time, one leading candidate showed the traditional three-footed menorah flanked by two other ancient symbols: a palm frond (*lulav*) and a ram's horn (*shofar*). Although the proposed emblem also incorporated seven stars, a symbol linked to the writings of Theodor Herzl, religious imagery clearly prevailed over political, and the proposal likewise included a Hebrew phrase, "peace over Israel," taken from Scripture.

In the end, however, the committee overseeing the choice of symbol declined this proposal, rejecting the biblical phrase, the *shofar* and *lulav*, and the tripod menorah, and settling ultimately on the menorah of the arch of Titus flanked by two olive branches signaling Israel's peaceful intentions. While granting that the pairing of a menorah with two olive branches nods to Israel's religious history by harking back to imagery from the book of the prophet Zechariah, Mishory writes that the emblem "clearly shows that in the struggle between the 'secular camp,' which wanted to emphasize the state's socialist and democratic present and future, and the 'religious camp,' which wished to stress the grandeur of the past and its link to the God of Israel, the former won."

Indeed, when the state's seal was officially announced, Rabbi Herzog, an ardent Zionist, protested on both religious and archeological grounds:

> It is not good what our government does today. Just when we have merited once again the light of Zion that is symbolized by the menorah, [the state] chose specifically the image of the menorah that is on the arch of Titus, which, it appears, was altered by foreigners. . . . And not only this, but an expert in the science of antiquities has testified to me that the menorahs that are formed on the graves in [Jewish] catacombs in Rome . . . are all with three legs, as are all those formed on the mosaics in the remains of ancient synagogues that are in the land of Israel.

"How right are the words of Rabbi Herzog," exclaims Sperber, for whom Israel's choice of emblem was a tragic error. In seeking to restore Jewish political honor, the Jewish state ended up insulting the Jewish faith; in seeking to emphasize Jewish political independence, it ended up selecting a symbol of Judaism's spiritual servitude.

THUS DOES a late-1940's debate over a state seal raise the deeper question of the ultimate purpose of the Jewish return to the Holy Land—a question that in modern Jewish thought long predates the birth of Israel itself. Was that purpose to enable the Jews to be a people like all others? Or was it to enable the Jewish people to forge a stronger relationship with their faith, with their God, and with their destiny?

For Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888), the foremost exponent of Orthodoxy in Germany, the first approach reflected the worldview of many a modern Jew for whom "the Jewish state, both of the past and of the future, is to be regarded as belonging to the same class as all other political phenomena." But this view, wrote Rabbi Hirsch, "is not the old Jewish view. It is in fact un-Jewish and untrue." And he continued, invoking the language of Isaiah:

> O, long not for the mighty state, for the state of deep diplomatic speech, for tongues which pur-

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> posely stammer and speak unintelligibly. Look upon Zion, the city of our future. Let thine eyes see Jerusalem, a home of peace, a tent that shall never more be removed, the stakes whereof shall never more be plucked up, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. For when the Lord shall be there with us in majesty, there in a place of broad rivers and streams no ship of war shall cruise, no vessel pass by. But God, our Judge, God our Lawgiver, God our King, He it is Who will then help us.

A Jewish commonwealth, in other words, embodies the idea that Jews are not merely one people among others, but have been chosen for an unparalleled relationship with the God Who dwells in Jerusalem. In the Bible, as Norman Podhoretz has observed ("Jerusalem: The Scandal of Particularity," COMMENTARY, July-August 2007), Jerusalem is both a political capital and a religious one; it is the capital both of Judea and of Judaism. This is the reason that, of all the fast days in the Jewish calendar, the ninth of Av is the saddest. Three weeks earlier, on another annual fast day, Jews mark the date on which the Romans broke through the walls of Jerusalem, the locus of the Jewish polity. On the ninth of Av, they bewail the ultimate defeat: the destruction of the Temple, the locus of the Jewish faith.

NO ONE understood this better, I would argue, than Titus himself. He did not see his victory over Judea as a purely political phenomenon, and he knew that undoing the deep damage he had successfully wrought would require much more than the restoration of Jewish power.

That brings us to still another mystery involving the images on the arch.

It is often assumed that the centerpiece of the Roman victory parade was the menorah. This is understandable enough: during the Second Temple period, the menorah served as the symbol of Jewish sovereignty on coins minted by Jewish kings. It is also logical, given the way the relief on the arch prominently positions the captured menorah to highlight the political subjugation of the Jews. But Josephus, who was an eyewitness of the triumphal procession, insists in his *Wars of the Jews* that the menorah (the appearance of which, he notes in passing, had been "changed from that which we made use of") was *not* the most salient object on display. In exhibiting what he had acquired from Jerusalem, Titus saved what he believed to be the most important artifact for last:

> [T]here followed those pageants [of captives] a great number of ships; and for the other spoils, they were carried in great plenty. But for those that were taken in the Temple of Jerusalem, they made the greatest figure of them all; that is, the golden table, of the weight of many talents; the candlestick also, that was made of gold, . . . *and the last of all the spoils was carried the Law of the Jews*. [emphasis added]

It seems, then, that for Titus the most significant of all the spoils taken from Jerusalem was a scroll of the Torah, the book of Jewish law. This statement by Josephus caught the attention of William Whiston, the historian's 18th-century translator, who remarks correctly that "the Law or Pentateuch does not appear on that arch at all"—a fact, he says, that deserves "the consideration of the inquisitive reader."

Why is the ostensible centerpiece of the spoils missing from Titus's arch? And what *was* this scroll that was displayed along with the Temple treasures?

In a series of lectures published in the 19th century, William Knight, then a lecturer at the University of Bristol, offered a theory as to the first of these puzzles. A review published at the time summarizes Knight's argument:

> Mr. Knight corroborates the account of Josephus by a passage, apparently overlooked by modern writers, from the work of Biondo, the earliest authority on the antiquities of Rome, who wrote in the first half of the 15th century, and who ends his description of the objects carried in the procession and sculptured on the arch with these words: "*Postea portabatur Lex Judaeorum marmoreal item extans.*" ("After this was carried the Law of the Jews, which also is extant in the marble.") This passage, which appears in the edition of 1511, is omitted in those printed in 1531 and 1559. May we not hence, with some probability, infer that between the years 1511 and 1531, the Book of the Law ceased to be visible in the bas-relief?

IN SHORT, according to Knight, the arch when built did contain an image depicting the parading of the Torah through the streets of Rome, but the image had become effaced over the centuries. Perhaps; as we shall see, there may be another explanation. But whatever the case may be, what exactly was the "Law of the Jews" that Titus brought back from Jerusalem?

It was unlikely to have been merely a scroll stolen randomly from some synagogue in Jerusalem. Rather, like all the other objects in the procession,

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it must have been a copy of the Law taken from the Temple itself. And indeed the Mishnah and the Talmud refer to a very valuable copy of the Torah that was kept in the Temple courtyard. Some versions call this the "*sefer Azarah*," the courtyard scroll, while others use a slightly different word with a similar spelling: "*sefer Ezra*," that is, the scroll written by Ezra, the leader who oversaw the initial building of the Second Temple after the Jews' return from exile in Babylonia.

The latter name signifies that the scroll was considered quite old and authoritative—hence, the source to be consulted in addressing any textual questions that might arise about the Law. And this copy of the Torah also served as a reminder of national priorities. Deuteronomy informs us that a Jewish king is obligated to write a Torah for himself and keep it with him at all times. Citing the discussion of this law in the Jerusalem Talmud, Maimonides in the 12th century adds an interesting detail:

> The king is commanded to write a Torah as a king, aside from the one he had as a commoner. . . . And [this Torah] is checked [against] the *Sefer ha-Azarah* according to the instruction of the High Court. That which he had as a commoner he places in storage, and the one he wrote after becoming king must be with him always. And if he goes out to war the Torah must be with him.

Maimonides here is recapitulating the ancient idea that while sovereignty was supremely important, and while Jews had to be prepared to defend themselves by means of military force when necessary, power could not be allowed to become an end in itself. Jews, especially those ruling in Jerusalem, could never forget that their ultimate obligation was to serve the God who dwelled in the Temple of Jerusalem.

No wonder, then, that Titus placed such a high value on the most important Torah in the possession of the Jewish people, the oldest and most authoritative version of the Mosaic Law, the one kept in the Temple as a symbol of Jewish chosenness. As if to emphasize the point, Josephus tells us that although the menorah and the other golden vessels were displayed in the Temple of Peace, the most valued objects seized by Titus, including the Law and the "purple veils of the holy place," were kept not there but in the royal palace.* Titus knew that his greatest victory was the capture not of Judea but of the Temple, and that his legacy lay first and foremost in the blow he had dealt to the Jewish faith by bringing about the exile of the Torah itself.

What Titus knew, the Jews knew as well, though they refused to accept it. Throughout the centuries of dispersion, the Jewish dream of redemption was always two-part: first, that Jewish sovereignty be restored over the land of Israel, and second, that the Torah return to the Temple of God and its supreme significance be recognized by all humanity. As the prophet Isaiah had proclaimed centuries earlier:

> And it shall come to pass in the end of days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

HAVE, THEN, the triumph of Titus and the message of the arch been undone? Or does there remain something to be mourned?

The idea that mourning for Zion has indeed become irrelevant is another notion that predates the founding of the state of Israel, and that in some places and times has even been acted upon. In describing a 19th-century instance of this, Rabbi Hirsch recalled how "one evening on the ninth of Av, the rabbi of a small town in South Germany had his synagogue brilliantly lit up and invited the members of his congregation to attend in their best clothes." Given the civil rights that German Jews had recently won, petitioning God for a return to Holy Land had evidently become an anachronism to this rabbi. "Jerusalem, he said, was here. Palestine was now situated on German soil."

In hindsight, such sentiments seem laughable or tragically deluded. But even at the time, Rabbi Hirsch found them radically deficient. On the ninth of Av, he wrote, Jews grieved for much more than their historic loss of political rights, and they still had much to mourn even after having been offered equal status as citizens:

> In the darkest centuries of the exile, when the Roman sword rent the curtain of the Temple . . . the majesty of God and the holiness of the Torah found refuge in Jewish family life, the Jewish home. . . . The barriers are [now] falling, the

* This may suggest a simpler solution to the puzzle of the arch's missing Torah—namely, that it was never there because Titus's sculptors relied only on the objects displayed in the Temple of Peace.

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> chains are being struck off. . . . Will Israel be able to carry over its intimacy with God from the ghetto into the court, from the hovels into the mansions, from the *heder* into the salon, from the corner shop into the office, from the shul into the "temple"? Is Israel equipped to take over with it into the new civic life the old allegiance to God, the old sanctity of the Torah? Or do the divine presence, the kingship of God, the Torah, face the last and sternest stage of their exile?

Today there still seems reason from a religious perspective to affirm the accuracy of Rabbi Hirsch's concerns. In both Israel and America, Jews have experienced unparalleled freedoms, achieved great economic success, and exercised appropriate degrees of political power. At the same time, unprecedented numbers in the United States have rejected Jewish particularity by intermarrying and assimilating, while post-Zionism has made analogous inroads into the core identity of many secular Jews in Israel. The exile of the Jews has to a palpable extent come to its end; but does not the exile of the Torah, boldly proclaimed by Titus, continue?

There have been, admittedly, moments of transcendent and redemptive significance that have infused even the most secular Jews with intimations of what it means to be a chosen people. Pondering the famous photograph of Israeli soldiers gazing in wonder at the just-captured Western Wall on the day Jerusalem was won in 1967, the writer Yossi Klein Halevi observes:

> Many of the paratroopers identified themselves as Israelis first, Jews only a distant second; some weren't quite sure whether they identified as Jews at all. And yet it is at the Wall of all places, symbol of the quietism of exile, where secular Israelis become reconciled with their Jewishness. As one paratrooper put it, "At the Wall I discovered that I'm a Jew." History had yielded the moment of consolation that generations of believing Jews had insisted, against all logic, must come. "We received the Torah at Mount Sinai," wrote the Yiddish poet Jacob Glatstein, "and in [the Holocaust] we gave it back." In Jerusalem, at the Wall, if only for a moment, we considered accepting it again.

"If only for a moment." And then the moment passed. Living in Jerusalem after Israel's failed 2006 campaign in Lebanon, in a season "in which the disappointments that have marred much of Israeli life in the last 25 years have culminated in . . . political shame and military defeat," Klein Halevi confesses that most of the time he does not feel he is in any place unusual. Even so, however, there continue to be those moments—moments in which

> I suddenly remember where I am. I feel myself, then, like one of those barefoot and wide-eyed Ethiopian immigrants, silently stepping off the plane at Ben-Gurion airport into Zion. I recall, too, my father's wonder at the Wall, whose fragile and improbable endurance he saw as a metaphor for the Jewish people. Like him, I ask myself what it is about this strange little people that continually finds itself at the center of international attention, repeatedly on the front lines against totalitarian forces of evil—Nazism, Soviet Communism, now jihadism—all of which [have] marked the Jews as their primary obstacle to achieving world domination. At those moments, I feel gratitude for having found my place in this story.

We live in an age when one might think that the chosenness of the Jews had become impossible to doubt. Yet, consciously or not, many Jews, in Israel and the Diaspora, doubt it all the same. In this sense, the menorah that has come to symbolize the Jewish state, the menorah of Titus, perfectly embodies the unredeemed condition of the world, a world in which there is both much to be joyously celebrated and much that remains to be mourned, and to be longed for. Not for nothing do religious Jews continue every morning to pray, in words recited for millennia,

> May You cause a new light to shine over Zion, and may we all soon be worthy of its light.

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Beyond the Pale
A Story

Joseph Epstein

I LEARNED MY Yiddish from my grandfather, who came from Montreal to live with us in Chicago for the last four years of his life, after his health failed and he could no longer stay alone. These were the years, just after World War II, when I was between fourteen and eighteen—not at all a bad age, really, for absorbing a new language. A small and somewhat foppish man, my grandfather began each day by wrapping himself in a prayer shawl and *tefillin* for his morning devotions. After bathing, he would dress in one of his five suits, tailor-made and very well-cut, which he maintained with great care and wore in rotation. His shirts were white and starched, his neckties dark. A thick gold watch chain depended from his vest. When he died he left the watch to me, and also, I would later come to realize, a certain standard of seriousness.

In Montreal, where he had spent much of his adult life, my grandfather had been a leading figure in Hebrew education. Old-timers in that city still remember Raphael Berman as a man of deep learning and wide culture. Living with us in Chicago must have marked a sad coming-down for him. "Immaculate" was the word my mother always used to describe her father-in-law; he, for his part, worried about her following the laws of *kashrut*, previously foreign to her. After more than 80 years keeping kosher, he feared falling off the wagon at this late stage of his life.

My grandfather still had strong memories of pogroms in his childhood *shtetl* a few miles outside Berdichev in the eastern Ukraine. He told me how his parents had managed to smuggle him out of Russia to avoid conscription into the czar's army. Although he never said so aloud, he must have been disappointed that none of his four sons—of whom my father, a successful retail furrier, was the youngest—had turned out to be in the least scholarly or even mildly bookish. There was only me, his grandson: a last chance to impart to another generation his love for Hebrew and above all for Yiddish, his sweet, endlessly subtle *mamaloshn*.

Patiently he taught me Yiddish grammar, syntax, vocabulary, the semantic intricacies of a language whose every word—even, my grandfather joked, the prepositions—seemed at least a triple-entendre. Once we had run through the few available lesson books, he led me gently into the great storytellers, Sholem Aleichem, Peretz, Mendele. Together we also read David Pinski and Chaim Grade and Abraham Reisen, even the problematic Sholem Asch.

At sixteen, I may have been the world's youngest reader of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, still sold in those days at the newsstand at Devon and California, four blocks from our apartment. It was in the pages of the *Forward* that I first came across the stories and serialized novels of Isaac Bashevis

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Singer, published, in their Yiddish version, under the name Bashevis. And it was there, too, that I first came across Zalman Belzner, a writer who interested me more than Singer.

Belzner wrote of the struggles of the young Jewish Communists in the early days of the Russian Revolution, and of the plight of young men caught between the traditional Judaism in which they had been raised and the lure of Haskalah, or Jewish "enlightenment" and secularization, in its various early-20th-century permutations. Belzner wrote about these things in the most vivid detail. He achieved realism, I remember my grandfather saying, rather cryptically, with none of its accompanying vulgarity.

I was still a kid, had not yet been exposed to Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky, Proust or Thomas Mann, but in Zalman Belzner I already sensed that I was encountering literary writing built to last a very long time. Such writing, it seemed to me then, was the exclusive province of the dead, of whom I assumed Belzner was one. "Oh, he's very much alive and kicking," my grandfather informed me when I inquired. "I believe he lives in New York, with his second wife, a story in herself, if you'll pardon the expression." My grandfather chose not to tell that story, at least not to an adolescent boy, but I could read a fair amount in his raised right eyebrow.

MY GRANDFATHER died the year I went off to college. There were not all that many Jewish students at Yale in the early 1950's, when strict quotas were still in effect, and those few among us did not exactly advertise our Jewishness. I studied English; after my grandfather's influence, I wasn't really good for anything but literature. In the fashion of the day, I was taught to unpack the meanings, often Christological, hidden in English lyric poems, and to comb and curry the symbols from the brooding works of American fiction, an exercise for which, after extended exposure to the power and charm of the great Yiddish writers, I hadn't much taste.

The study of English at Yale convinced me that I did not want to teach, and so, upon leaving New Haven, I took a job at *Time* magazine, where Yalies in those days, even Jewish ones, had an inside track. The work paid well, and many interesting characters were still on the premises, drawing large checks and full of contempt for their jobs, their boss, and the society that forced men of their talent to slave at infusing the trivia of the news with interest and dash. I myself felt lucky to have the job. And then, too, I met Naomi, my wife, at *Time*, where, after graduating from Radcliffe, she had been hired as a researcher.

Living in New York I began to read the *Forward* again, every so often buying a copy from the newsstand at 79th and Broadway not far from our apartment. In the *Forward* I came upon a notice of a reading by none other than Zalman Belzner at the Rand School, downtown near Union Square. Since Belzner was now in his early eighties, and would live who knew how much longer, I felt I couldn't miss it.

Including the rickety woman on two canes who introduced the guest of honor, there were seventeen of us in the audience that Thursday night, twelve women and five men. I must have been the youngest person in the room by fifty years. The crowd reminded me a little of the one that had gathered on a cold February evening in Chicago to mark the death of William Z. Foster, who in 1932 had been the Communist candidate for President of the United States. I no longer remember why I attended that event, but, like the American Communist party, Yiddish literature in the 1950's seemed to me another, if much more gallant, lost cause.

Zalman Belzner was given an introduction in which he was at one point called the Homer, and at another the Shakespeare, of 20th-century Yiddish literature. As he slowly approached the lectern, one could see that he was near the end of his trail. He was a large man, and must once have been very handsome. His skin was wrinkled but pinkish, his hair white and still plentiful; in fact, he was in need of a haircut. He had big, fleshy ears, which stuck out. His features, as sometimes happens with people in old age, had become a bit blurry, as if someone had fooled with the contrast button. His hands were large; lifting them seemed to require an effort. His breathing carried a low rasping sound.

Yet as soon as he began reading, passion kicked in and Belzner's age dropped away. He began, in Yiddish, with a series of five poems, recounting the cycle of Jewish hope and disaster that was the great revolution in Russia. He next read, also in Yiddish, from two welcoming letters sent to him by Sholem Aleichem upon his first publications. Next, in somewhat stilted English, he read from what he called "a work in progress," a section from a new novel about a young yeshiva student in Vilna whose passion for a beautiful young leftist catches him up in the intricacies of revolutionary politics. Belzner's strong greenhorn accent made what he read seem all the more powerful. At the end of this excerpt he thanked his wife, Gerda, for her work on the translation.

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APPLAUDING, everyone turned to look at a woman sitting in the row in front of mine and a bit to my left. Gerda Belzner looked to be in her late fifties, at least two decades younger than her husband, small and very thin, with fine bones and emphatic features and hair dyed henna-red. She sat with an impressive uprightness; deep pride showed in her bearing. She took the applause, I felt, rather as if she were not the translator but herself the author.

A reception had been set up that reminded me of the small spread after *shabbes* services at Ner Tamid Synagogue where I used to accompany my grandfather. Slices of sponge cake and small glasses of Mogen David wine plus, in this case, a samovar with glasses for tea. Belzner was standing; supported by a cane that he hadn't used at the lectern, his wife holding his other arm, he was talking to three admiring elderly women. After they wandered off, I went up to him.

"Mr. Belzner," I said, "my name is Arnold Berman, and I work for *Time* magazine, and I just wanted to tell you that your writing has meant a great deal to me, and I want to thank you for it."

"No, no," Belzner said, extending his hand, "it is I who must thank you. All that a writer can ask for is intelligent and generous-hearted readers. And in you, young man, I seem to have found such a reader. I am most grateful to you." I felt my hand disappear in his large padded paw.

"If you don't mind my asking, Mr. Berman," said Mrs. Belzner, "how did you come to learn about my husband's writing, a man so young as you?" She was less than five feet tall and her eyes, more black than brown, shone fiercely. Her accent was as strong as her husband's but metallic and harsh where his was warm and caressing.

"Through my grandfather, who taught me Yiddish."

"And for *Time* magazine," she said, "what exactly, if I may ask, it is that you do?"

Don't ask me why, but I lied, or at any rate exaggerated. "I write about culture," I said, "mostly things in what we call 'the back of the book.'" In fact, in those days I chiefly wrote the squibs, in the section of the magazine called Milestones, about recent births and deaths and divorces among the celebrated.

Two other women had captured Belzner's attention, and he was expending his charm on them, but Mrs. Belzner stayed with me. "You would like a piece of sponge cake or a glass tea?" she asked.

"Thank you, no," I said. "I really must be going, but I didn't want to leave without telling your husband how much I admired his work."

"He is a great writer, Zalman Belzner," she said, fire in her eye, "and if he wrote in any other language but Yiddish, the world would long ago have known it."

I told her I thought she was absolutely right about this, and excused myself.

THE NEXT afternoon at the office, just after I returned from lunch, the receptionist called to say that a large package had been left for me. When I picked it up, I discovered that it contained three of Zalman Belzner's books in Yiddish, all inscribed to me, and a copy, in manuscript, of his wife's translation of *Beyond the Pale*, the book from which he had read the night before. It also contained no fewer than 30 reviews of Belzner's work, almost all of them from the Yiddish press, and, in an emphatic hand, a four-page letter from Mrs. Gerda Belzner.

I'll spare you the florid *politesse* of her opening and closing paragraphs, which could only have been written by someone whose first or second or even third language was not English and were in a style more appropriate to the 18th century than to our own. The main point of her letter was, as she put it, "a simple but felicitous idea"—namely, that *Time* put Zalman Belzner on its cover, with a story, to be written by me, about his travails as a great Yiddish author. She, who knew Zalman Belzner's life better than anyone in the world, would be pleased to fill me in on the facts, perhaps over lunch at the Belzners' apartment on West End Avenue at, she wrote, underlining, "*your earliest permissible convenience*," adding: "maybe next Tuesday." She also noted that she would appreciate my comments on her translation of *Beyond the Pale*.

I waited until the next day to call.

"Mrs. Belzner," I said, lying again, "I talked over the idea of a cover story about your husband with Mr. Luce, our editor-in-chief, and he said that while he thought the notion had much merit, perhaps the timing was wrong. In any case, we've already run three covers on writers within the last fourteen months. He asked me to thank you for your interest and to congratulate you on the translation of *Beyond the Pale*."

The truth was that I had never met Henry Luce, having been in the same room with him only once and then was too nervous to introduce myself. Except as the wildest comedy, I certainly could not imagine discussing with him, or with any of the senior editors, a *Time* cover on Zalman Belzner.

"You'll maybe forgive my saying so, Mr. Berman," she said, "but this man Mr. Luce must be

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an idiot. Zalman Belzner is probably the greatest writer in the 20th century, and hardly anyone knows about it. *Time* is a news magazine, no? If this isn't news, what, if I may ask, is?"

"You're probably right, Mrs. Belzner," I said, "but it's Mr. Luce's magazine, and what he says goes."

"Like I say, an idiot," she said. "But you'll come to lunch anyhow?"

"I'll be happy to," I said.

"Next Tuesday, at 1:30 is good. Zalman Belzner writes from ten till one. You have the address?"

THE BELZNERS' building at 420 West End Avenue was not all that far geographically from where Naomi and I lived, but in certain respects it seemed a different world. Although the west side was entering a decline that would only get messier and more dangerous as the 60's wore on, most of the large buildings on West End retained their air of solid if shopworn gentility. The side streets were another matter; the thought of the shaky Zalman Belzner on his cane walking those streets was not pleasant to contemplate.

An elderly doorman in a shabby maroon coat, hat slightly askew, informed me that the Belzners lived on the sixth floor. Someone had scratched UP YOURS on the inside of the elevator door. The interior halls were gloomy and gave off a cabbagey smell. When I knocked, Gerda Belzner came to the door.

"Mr. Berman," she said, "I'm sorry to have to inform you that Zalman Belzner, because of poor health, will not be able to join us for lunch today."

"Nothing serious, I hope," I said.

"With Zalman Belzner, everything is serious," she replied. "He is a sick man."

"What's wrong?"

"The after-effects of tuberculosis, which, not helped by his having smoked for so long, have turned into emphysema," she said. "Another gift from mother Russia, the tuberculosis. Zalman Belzner, you should know, is a writer who has been a guest at the Lubyanka prison under two regimes, the Czar's and the Communists'."

I hadn't known. Nor did I know, as I would soon discover, that Belzner was acquainted with Babel, Pasternak, Akhmatova, and the Mandelstams. His second wife filled me in on these and other matters. Belzner's first wife, according to Gerda Belzner, was a maniacal Communist. She had tried to convince him to write in the style of socialist realism, to desert Yiddish for Russian, and, later, to take up the editorship of the Yiddish magazine *Soviet Homeland*, which was devoted to the lie that Jewish culture in the Soviet Union was thriving. When Zalman Belzner was able to flee the Soviet Union, she chose not to go with him. She was said to have died in the Gulag in 1950, three years before the death of Stalin.

While telling me these stories, Gerda Belzner would frequently interrupt to go to the back of the apartment—to minister to her husband, I assumed. At each return she took up the conversation without missing a beat. She told me that she had met Zalman Belzner after he had defected; he lived briefly in Paris before moving to New York. She was herself originally from Warsaw, a refugee from Hitler. As a young girl, a member of various Jewish literary societies in Warsaw, she had of course read Belzner and admired him greatly. When she met him in New York she was immediately swept away. "He was," she said, "an even more handsome man than he is today."

"You understand, Mr. Berman," she said, "my life is devoted entirely to the work of Zalman Belzner. It has no other meaning."

She didn't really have to say it. Everything about her underscored the point, not least her inability to refer to her husband except by his full name, as if she were reading it off a title page.

Gerda Belzner served me a bowl of cold and not very good borscht, a platter of cold tongue and hard salami, rye bread, a sliced onion, a tomato, some too strong coffee, with grapes and an over-ripe banana for dessert. None of the food seemed quite fresh. But, then, neither did anything about the dark and dusty apartment, whose every available flat surface was covered by Yiddish books and newspapers. The windows had not been cleaned for a long time, and the light coming in felt crepuscular, even though it was mid-day. Every so often I would hear a weak but wracking cough from the back. I imagined poor Belzner, sequestered in his room in an old woolen bathrobe in a bed with less than clean sheets. A homemaker Gerda Belzner clearly was not.

"AND SO, Mr. Berman," she asked, "have you had a chance to read my translation of *Beyond the Pale*? And if you have, what, if I may ask, do you think?"

"It's a wonderful story," I said, "and the translation is excellent, fluent, only a few rough spots."

I was truthful about the story but not about the translation, which was stiff, overly ornate, studded with odd bits of immigrant English, its syntax hopeless, sometimes bordering on the comic. The Yiddish of the Zalman Belzner I remembered from

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my grandfather's *Forward* was straight, delivered with power and unshowy verbal agility, in staccato, machinegun-like sentences. Only well after you read a passage did it occur to you to wonder how, in so few strokes, he had managed to bring off the astonishing effects he did. His skill as a pure storyteller deflected your attention from the style that gave his tales their magic.

"I have now sent this translation to nine American publishers, none of whom has expressed any interest whatsoever," she said. "What do you make of this, Mr. Berman?"

"I'm not quite certain what to make of it," I said, "except perhaps that there may be limited interest in your husband's subject matter. We live in sensationalist times. Everything is geared to the contemporary."

"Then how do you account for the success of that pig Singer?" She did not so much pronounce as spit his name.

I.B. Singer was just then beginning to catch on with a large American audience. "Even for Singer I'm told it hasn't been so easy," I answered. "I've heard that when Knopf brought out *The Family Moskat*, they cut the manuscript substantially. It's a hard world, the world of American publishing, with very little sentimentality."

"May I ask you a very great favor, Mr. Berman? May I ask you to go over my translation once more, with an eye to eliminating the rough spots you mention, and then maybe to think about where next to send the book? More than anything in this life, I want *Beyond the Pale* published while Zalman Belzner is yet alive."

Careful, Arnie, I said to myself. This woman can only be trouble. Besides, I had quite enough going on in my life. There was my job at *Time*, up whose masthead I had only begun to climb—I was now an associate editor, and had become the magazine's third movie reviewer. My wife was pregnant with our first child. I had writing ambitions of my own; I was on the lookout for a good subject about whom to write a biography. To take on the polishing of this wretched translation—polishing, hell, a full re-translation was required—was not exactly a good career move.

Of course, there was Belzner himself to consider. However reduced his circumstances, he was a great writer; of that there couldn't be any doubt. And my grandfather, I thought, would have been pleased that his grandson was putting his training to such high purposes. The manuscript of *Beyond the Pale*, in Yiddish, ran to 460-odd pages. A fair portion of it was in dialogue. If I could do two pages a night, with perhaps a little more on weekends, I might have the whole thing done in fewer than six months. Gerda Belzner set off all my warning signals—dangerous, nutty woman, *beware*—but her husband's situation was serious and sad. Never suffocate a generous impulse, my grandfather used to say.

"Let me give it a try," I said. "Working at a full-time job, I can't promise to have it done too quickly, Mrs. Belzner. But maybe, just maybe, I can smooth out the rough spots and make the novel a bit more attractive to an American publisher."

"Tank you, Mr. Berman," she said, failing to pronounce the h, "and I know that Zalman Belzner will want to tank you, too, and will do so in person once he is again up and around. We are both most grateful to you, please never to forget that."

Leaving the Belzners' apartment, the Yiddish manuscript and Gerda Belzner's translation in a Klein's shopping bag, I thought, well, kid, you're in the soup now, up to your lower lip. Out on West End Avenue it had begun to rain. On the side street to Broadway a young guy in a tweed jacket three sizes too big for him, a crazed look in his eyes, approached.

"Hey, buddy," he said, "can I have all your change?"

Caught off guard, I reached into my pocket and gave him what must have been nearly two bucks in silver.

"Thanks, pal," he said. As he walked away I noted a large tear in the seat of his pants.

This was, apparently, my big day for charity.

AFTER MY second session with *Beyond the Pale*, I dispensed altogether with Gerda Belzner's translation, which was, as I discovered on closer scrutiny, crude beyond retrieving. The novel, however, was Zalman Belzner's masterpiece. It recounted the life of a boy, Eliezer Berliner, brought up in strict religious observance, a star pupil at one of the great yeshivas in Vilna, with all the potential to be a great scholar and rabbi, who runs off to Russia, lives among revolutionaries in Moscow where Jews were not allowed, is captured and imprisoned in the Lubyanka, rejoins his comrades on the eve of the Russian Revolution, only to be jailed again two years later by the Soviet secret police, and finally flees to Paris, where he hopes to devote his life to poetry. Belzner had supplied brilliant cameo roles for Lenin and Trotsky, Bukharin and the young Stalin. In his taut narrative, Belzner took on the emptiness of formal religion, the hopelessness of radical politics, the vanity of all art that does not ultimately turn one back to religious contem-

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plation, if of a vastly different kind from that ever dreamed of by the Vilna rabbis who trained his protagonist.

Belzner's method in telling Eliezer Berliner's story was pointillism of a sort, a careful setting down of dots, one after another, of precise and synecdochical detail. So perfectly had he linked these dots that one read with the intensity of a dying man racing through a book prescribing hitherto unknown cures for his disease. As a boy, I had done translation exercises of a page or two for my grandfather, but nothing so extended as this. I found myself working four hours a day on *Beyond the Pale*—two hours in the early morning before going off to *Time*, another two after Naomi, tired from her pregnancy, had gone to bed. I thought about it at work, in my mind revising English phrasings that weren't quite adequate to Belzner's powerful text. I lingered over it before I fell off to sleep, reformulating sentences, my arm around my wife and my mind in Moscow with the young Eliezer Berliner.

It was only a translation, but I found an immense excitement in the task. By now I knew that in my own life I would never attain to truly creative work; toiling on Zalman Belzner's manuscript was as close as I was ever likely to come to the thing called literature. In getting things right, a great deal—everything, really—was at stake.

I finished two months earlier than I planned and sent the work, along with Gerda Belzner's version, to the apartment on West End Avenue. Four days later she called.

"Mr. Berman," she said, "Zalman Belzner has read your translation of his novel, *Beyond the Pale*, and would like to meet to talk with you about it. When, if I may ask, are you available?"

We settled on Thursday. She suggested lunch at their apartment, once again at 1:30.

This time Belzner himself answered the door. His largeness filled the doorway. He was wearing unpressed gray trousers, a rumpled white shirt with an ink stain near the pocket, and at his neck a skimpy paisley ascot with a maroon background. His eyes looked more tired than I remembered from our previous meeting at the Rand School.

"Ah, Mr. Berman," he said, full of bonhomie, "is good to see you once more. Do come in. Do come in."

The same table was set—once again for two—in the small living room.

"My wife will not be joining us today," he said, "which is perhaps just as well, since it is about her that we must talk, at least in part."

The meal, already on the table, turned out to be exactly the same as the one Gerda Belzner had served me roughly four months earlier, from borscht to the tired fruit compote. Belzner questioned me a bit about my grandfather and his origins. When I said he came from Odessa, Belzner smiled and said, "Ah, the city of Jewish violinists and Benya Krik, the great Jewish gangster." He told me about his meeting with Krik's creator Isaac Babel, also of Odessa, and about Babel's craze for literary revision: 40 and 50 times he would rework a simple three-page story.

OVER THE fruit compote our conversation began in earnest. "I wish to speak to you, of course, about your translation of my book. My English is less than perfect, as you can hear even now as I talk to you, but your translation seems to me excellent, highly excellent really, and I am most grateful to you for the care you must have put into it. For a writer in Yiddish, as you must know, a good translator into English is not important merely—it is everything."

"I'm pleased you think well of it," I said, genuinely delighted.

"I think very well of it, but I couldn't help noticing you seem not to have made much use of my wife's work as first translator of the book. Is this not correct?"

"Correct," I said. "I felt it was better to begin from scratch."

"Yes," he said, "from scratch." He stopped to think about an American idiom that was evidently new to him. "From scratch. I see what you mean. What I wonder now is whether I can convince you to share the credit with Mrs. Belzner as co-translator of the book. It would mean a great deal to her if you were to do so. Meanwhile, in recompense, I am sure some royalty arrangement on the translation could be worked out in your favor."

"It's a little irregular," I said.

"I'm sure it is," Belzner said, "but then, as you may have noticed, so is life and so especially is Mrs. Belzner a little irregular. She is not an ordinary woman, my Gerda, as you will have noted."

"It would be difficult not to note it," I said, trying to sound neutral.

"She, I fear, has maybe a greater investment in her husband than is perhaps normal. But then I owe her everything. More even than I am able to explain to you. She has saved my life, and continues to save it every day that remains to me. Without her, please believe me, I would long ago have been dead." Belzner took a soiled handkerchief out

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of his back pocket, and dabbed at his flushed face.

"I told Gerda," he continued, "that your translation was built on hers, that it was, in the highest sense, a collaboration between two good minds. To do otherwise, you understand, would have been very cruel. And you don't seem to me a cruel man, Mr. Berman."

"I hope not," I replied.

"Excellent," Belzner said. "When my wife returns I shall tell her that, if we are able to get an American publisher, the title page will read, 'Translation by Gerda Belzner and Allan Berman.' She will be pleased."

"Arnold," I said.

"I'm sorry?" he said, cupping his right ear.

"My name is Arnold, not Allan."

"A thousand apologies," he said. "Please to forgive."

Zalman Belzner walked me to the door. He moved as if in slow motion; his footfall was heavy; I could hear his every breath. As we parted, he grasped my hand in both of his and said, "I am more in your debt than you can ever know. I thank you, Mr. Bergman."

Through a connection at *Time*, I was able to get my translation into the hands of Ben Rayburn, a small publisher interested in things Jewish, who quietly brought it out eight months later under his Horizon imprint. I was unable to attend the small publication party for the book. A page-three, highly laudatory review by Irving Howe appeared in the *New York Times Book Review*, with a brief paragraph toward the end commending the "stately translation" of Gerda Belzner and Arnold Berman. *Beyond the Pale* had a modest sale of some 2,700 copies. I never saw a penny in royalties, which was all right with me. I hadn't done it for money. I did it for Zalman Belzner; I did it for my grandfather; who knows, maybe I did it for myself. In any case it was over, and I went back to my regular family life and to my job at *Time*.

ROUGHLY eighteen months after the publication of *Beyond the Pale*, around eleven-thirty on a Tuesday night, I stumbled out of bed to answer the telephone.

"Mr. Berman," said Gerda Belzner, in her unmistakable accent, "my husband Zalman Belzner is terribly ill and needs to be driven to Florida—tonight. Can I count on you to help me drive Zalman Belzner to Miami? We need to leave immediately, within the hour."

"Mrs. Belzner," I said, "can't this wait till the morning?"

"No," she said, "Zalman Belzner must leave for Florida now. There is no time to lose. Can you help me drive him to Florida or not?"

"Mrs. Belzner," I said, "I have a pregnant wife and a young child to worry about. I have a job. I can't take off for Florida at midnight on such short notice."

"Very well," she said. "Thank you anyhow."

"Mrs. Belzner . . . ." But she had hung up.

Two days later I read the six-inch obituary of Zalman Belzner that ran in the *New York Times*. It announced that he had died, of congestive heart failure, on Monday, the day before Gerda Belzner's call, and that he was being buried that day in a private ceremony.

From my office at *Time*, I called Gerda Belzner.

"Mrs. Belzner," I said, "I see in the *Times* that your husband's funeral is today, though no address for a funeral chapel is given. Where is it to take place?" "I am sorry, Mr. Berman," she said, "but you are not invited. No one is invited who refused to drive Zalman Belzner to Florida with me."

"But Mrs. Belzner," I said, "unless I'm mistaken, when you asked me to drive your husband to Florida, he was, according to the *New York Times* obituary, already dead."

"That," she said, in a cold voice, "is none of your business. You were unavailable when needed. I am inviting to the funeral only those friends of Zalman Belzner who were willing to drive him with me to Florida. Thank you anyhow for asking." She hung up.

I stared into the phone. What was going on here? Another Jewish test? Our religion, after all, almost begins with a test, when God commands Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. But this test of Gerda Belzner's, driving a man already dead to Florida, at midnight and on a moment's notice, provided a new twist—this was nuts. In any case, I had failed the test.

But my Belzner connection was not permanently broken. A few months later, Gerda Belzner called again. She wanted another meeting. She suggested a dairy restaurant on Broadway near 86th Street. I wanted to say no, but somehow I couldn't bring myself to be cold to this woman, who was now, for all I knew, absolutely alone in the world.

I arrived fifteen minutes early. The crowd in the restaurant was made up chiefly of elderly Jews, most of them immigrants to judge by their speech and dress. The majority must have escaped Hitler or Stalin; some may have had to escape both. They had seen the devil up close. I felt callow in their presence.

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When Gerda Belzner walked in, she was wearing a black cloth coat with a black dress underneath, boots with high heels, her henna-colored hair swept up in a bouffant, her makeup at maximum strength, leaving her sharp features in something approaching boldface. She seemed a small, possibly predatory bird. Yet there was also a touch of the regal in her appearance. She was, after all, now the widow of Zalman Belzner.

Along with her purse, she was carrying another of her shopping bags from Klein's. I rose and waved from my table. She saw me and walked over.

"Well, Mr. Berman," she said, "we meet again."

"I thought perhaps we had seen the last of each other."

"Why would you think that?"

"It's been a while," I said, choosing not to mention the funeral from which I had been excluded.

We ordered vegetarian cutlets, small salads, tea. The waiter, an older man, flat-footed, a slightly dirty towel over his forearm, looked and sounded like something straight out of a classic Jewish vaudeville routine. ("Vich of you gentlemen vanted the clean glass?")

"Mr. Berman," she said, getting right down to business, "I have today a proposition to make to you."

"What might it be, Mrs. Belzner?"

"I WANT YOU should translate with me six of my husband's as yet untranslated novels. My plan is for us to do them together, as we did with *Beyond the Pale*. I would give you a third of the royalties on each of the books." She passed her shopping bag over to me; it contained copies, in Yiddish, of the books.

"Forgive me for saying so, Mrs. Belzner, but that doesn't finally come to a lot of money. I have a wife and child to support, and another on the way. You realize you're asking for a commitment here of several years on my part."

"Which reminds me," she said, "please give my very best wishes to your Mr. Luce. All right, then, how about half the royalties?"

"That's very generous of you. But the objection remains the same. The truth is I couldn't afford to do it for all the royalties. Money isn't really the main point here, Mrs. Belzner."

"Then what is?" she asked.

"The main point is that I have to get on with my life. There are literary projects of my own that I would like to work on."

"I don't know what these things might be," she said, "but how can they be more important than seeing that the books of Zalman Belzner, a man who belongs to world literature, find their rightful readers? Let's not kid ourselves, Mr. Berman. What you are going to write for yourself cannot compare with the writing of Zalman Belzner."

This was an argument I had no way of winning—at least not with this intense little woman sitting across the table from me. I told her I would have to think it over. We had rice pudding and coffee. Mrs. Belzner was without small talk, or at least any that she wished to expend on me. She repeated the urgency of getting all of Zalman Belzner's works into good English-language editions as soon as possible. She went into a little tirade against Isaac Bashevis Singer, who had been so fortunate in his translators, but whose filthy writings could not compare with those of her husband.

"Zalman Belzner is a very great writer, as you know maybe as well as anyone in this country, present company excepted," she said. "Someday, with God's help and yours and mine, Mr. Berman, he will have the readership he deserves." She touched my hand as she said this. I looked into her eyes, and saw, for the first and only time in all my days, what it meant to have a true mission in life.

When we parted outside the restaurant, I told her I would call her within the next few weeks. I had agreed to take one of her husband's novels home to read, and I now shifted it to my left hand in order to shake her own small, boney, and dry hand. I watched her walk off down Broadway, her thin legs in high-heeled boots, swinging her Klein's bag before disappearing amid a wild assortment of scruffy kids, elderly Jewish couples, failed hustlers, and who knew how many others with spoiled ambitions and busted dreams, none of whom had ever heard or could possibly ever hear of Zalman Belzner.

I had already made up my mind at the restaurant not to take on the translation of any of these novels. The whole thing was hopeless. At *Time* I had been made a general editor. I was doing the occasional book review, and was called in to help edit the magazine's larger culture stories. One of the senior editors let me know that the magazine was soon going to need a new theater critic and asked if I had any interest in the job. In short, it was no time for me to be spending all my free hours sweating over books about old Jews cavorting around Eastern Europe in a culture that had long since been wiped out.

In the cab on the way back to the Time-Life building, I thought I would write Gerda Belzner a letter in which I would set out my responsibilities to my career, to my family, and to myself, and how

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I must give these priority. Even she could see that first things came first—that the living have a greater claim on us than the dead. And if she couldn't see it, well too damn bad.

I didn't have much luck with the letter. I intended it to be less than a page, but it kept running on, in one version to five full pages before I even got to my wife and family. I attempted a second draft and then a third, both unsatisfactory.

A couple of weeks after our lunch, Gerda Belzner phoned.

"Mr. Berman," she began, "I have called to report to you that Zalman Belzner's reputation is in peril."

"In peril?" I asked. "How in peril, Mrs. Belzner?"

"An essay on Yiddish writers appears in a Philadelphia Jewish paper, *The Investigator*—maybe you know it? It pretends to discuss Yiddish literature and yet it makes no mention, none whatsoever, of Zalman Belzner. Mr. Berman, it is incumbent on you to write a strong letter of complaint to the editor. It wouldn't be such a bad idea to do it on your company stationery. In this letter you might say that the failure to mention Zalman Belzner in such an article is not an oversight but an outrage, which no serious student of Yiddish literature can be expected to tolerate."

"Mrs. Belzner," I said, "the absence of mention of your husband is a serious mistake, I agree, but it is not slanderous. I think we'd do best to let it pass."

I scarcely noticed the "we" crossing my lips. "In any case, Mrs. Belzner," I continued, "I don't think a letter of protest would be quite in order. I'm not sure what would be, but let me think further about it."

"You'll call me back?" she said.

"Yes, of course," I said.

Before the week was out, my wife's water broke, at two in the morning. In good sit-com fashion, I woke our daughter and brought her over to our neighbors, the Hoffmans, with whom we had become good friends. And then, forgetting my wife's already packed small suitcase, I called a cab. We were waiting downstairs when I realized my error. Back in the apartment, I remembered that I might be spending hours in the maternity waiting-room and scuttled about for something to read. I came up with *Yeshiva Bokher*, the novel in Yiddish that I had taken from Gerda Belzner on the day of our lunch.

Naomi was twenty hours in labor, during which time I finished more than 400 pages of Zalman Belzner's 626-page novel about life at one of the great rabbinical schools in Lithuania in the late 19th century. It was brilliant stuff, entrancing, absolutely dazzling. As I read its confidently cadenced Yiddish, all I could think about was proper English equivalents. A fair amount of the material in the novel had to do with complex Jewish texts, mostly legal, about which I knew next to nothing. Any translator would have to be versed in them and in the historical life of the time. Nearly twice the length of *Beyond the Pale*, *Yeshiva Bokher* was in every way a much denser and more difficult work, requiring at least two years, maybe more, to render into English. A job not likely to be done again soon, if ever, it had to be done supremely well.

To be a translator was to be at best a secondary figure. To be a translator from Yiddish, a language now plundered for its idioms mainly by comedians and spoken by nobody under fifty not wearing a black hat—this was hopeless, to condemn oneself to the periphery of a periphery. Why was I so drawn to it? Even now I can't say. All I can provide by way of explanation, to myself if to no one else, is a line from Keats that I must have picked up at Yale, probably in Cleanth Brooks's class on the Romantics: "so I may do the deed/That my own soul has to itself decreed."

My newborn son weighed seven pounds six ounces. Two days before the *bris* in our apartment, my wife yielded to my wish to name him Zachariah. Since neither of our families had any relatives with names beginning with the letter Z, it was a mystery to everyone in attendance. To everyone, that is, but a small woman with dyed red hair and too much makeup who, with the look of a fanatic in her eye, stood off in the corner, spoke to no one, and never smiled. She had arrived at the *bris* without a gift for our new baby but with a heavily-laden bag from Klein's, and she departed empty-handed before the food was served.

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OBSERVATIONS

Goldwater, the John Birch Society, and Me

William F. Buckley, Jr.

IN THE early months of 1962, there was restiveness in certain political quarters of the Right. The concern was primarily the growing strength of the Soviet Union, and the reiteration by its leaders of their designs on the free world. Some of the actors keenly concerned felt that Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona was a natural leader in the days ahead.

But it seemed inconceivable that an anti-establishment gadfly like Goldwater could be nominated as the spokesman-head of a political party. And it was embarrassing that the only political organization in town that dared suggest this radical proposal—the GOP's nominating Goldwater for President—was the John Birch Society.

The society had been founded in 1958 by an earnest and capable entrepreneur named Robert Welch, a candy man, who brought together little clusters of American conservatives, most of them businessmen. He demanded two undistracted days in exchange for his willingness to give his seminar on the Communist menace to the United States, which he believed was more thoroughgoing and far-reaching than anyone else in America could have conceived. His influence was near-hypnotic, and his ideas wild. He said Dwight D. Eisenhower was a "dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy," and that the government of the United States was "under operational control of the Communist party." It was, he said in the summer of 1961, "50-70 percent" Communist-controlled.

Welch refused to divulge the size of the society's membership, though he suggested it was as high as 100,000 and could reach a million. His method of organization caused general alarm. The society comprised a series of cells, no more than twenty people per cell. It was said that its members were directed to run in secret for local offices and to harass school boards and librarians on the matter of the Communist nature of the textbooks and other materials they used.

The society became a national *cause célèbre*—so much so, that a few of those anxious to universalize a draft-Goldwater movement aiming at a nomination for President in 1964 thought it best to do a little conspiratorial organizing of their own against it.

IN JANUARY of that year I had a telephone call from William Baroody. It was, he said, a matter of great national importance that I spend Tuesday and Wednesday of the following week with Senator Goldwater in Palm Beach, Florida. I would be one of three—along with Russell Kirk, the philosopher and author of the seminal 1953 text *The Conservative Mind*, and public-relations man Jay Hall, who had represented General Motors in Washington. I said I could be there up until 5 p.m. on day one and all of day two. I had a speaking date in St. Augustine on the first night. Baroody simply repeated that the meeting was very important.

Baroody was the head of the American Enterprise Institute, a right-wing think tank founded in 1943. We had met only cursorily, though I knew him to be an influ-

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY, JR. *is the founder and former editor-in-chief of* National Review. *The present essay, in different form, will appear in his new book,* Flying High: Remembering Barry Goldwater, *forthcoming from Basic Books.* *Copyright © 2008 by William F. Buckley, Jr.*

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ential figure in behind-the-scenes conservative politics. He was invigorated by meetings with small groups, which he much enjoyed dominating. It was clear that he greatly aspired to be important to Goldwater, and perhaps to a Goldwater White House.

I ARRIVED at breakfast with the other invitees at the imposing Breakers Hotel and ventilated the critical point: were we here assembled to answer Goldwater's questions, or to proffer advice on the presidential campaign two years ahead? If the latter, this had to mean that Goldwater had resolved to enter the campaign, which would be big news: so far, he had steadfastly declined to take that step.

Baroody, by nature domineering, was emphatic on the subject. *Under no circumstances* should anything be said touching on a presidential campaign, inasmuch as Goldwater had not himself decided whether to run and did not want to spend time discussing the issue.

Russell Kirk was not prepared simply to leave the matter closed. "What is more important," he asked Baroody, "than to try to get Goldwater elected President?"

Baroody was obliged to agree that this would be a wonderful national achievement. "But he has said no."

"They always say no," I volunteered.

"Bill, he has said no on at least five different occasions. If he thought we were going to spend the day on that subject, he would just walk away."

Kirk objected. "I'm the least experienced politically of the people in this room. But I've seen the polls—we've all seen the polls—and Bill has a point: why should we shrink from telling him that's what he ought to do?"

It required someone of Kirk's arrant innocence in consorting with brute political forces to make his point so insistently. He let go of it only after Baroody promised that he would seek out, some time later, an opportunity for Russell to argue it personally with Goldwater. "Maybe you can tell him something about William Pitt that will change his mind."

Kirk smiled. "Very well. So what do you have in mind for us?"

"We'll have to coast on that."

GOLDWATER WAS in Palm Beach visiting, incognito, with a sister-in-law who was resident there. He arrived at our hotel suite at about 11:00 in extravagantly informal garb, cowboy hat and dark glasses, a workman's blue shirt, and denim jeans, together with his beloved Western boots. He did bring along a weather-beaten briefcase, though I never noticed his opening it the whole day.

What followed was an hour of general discussion on the policies of President Kennedy and the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. Baroody noted Kennedy's surprising drop in the polls: 61 percent of the public thought he spent money too freely, a third thought him unduly weak in opposing Soviet challenges in Berlin and elsewhere.

Moving on, Baroody brought up the John Birch Society. It was quickly obvious that this was the subject Goldwater wished counsel on.

Kirk, unimpeded by his little professorial stutter, greeted the subject with fervor. It was his opinion, he said emphatically, that Robert Welch was a man disconnected from reality. How could anyone reason, as Welch had done in *The Politician*, that President Eisenhower had been a secret agent of the Communists? This mischievous unreality was a great weight on the back of responsible conservative political thinking. The John Birch Society should be renounced by Goldwater and by everyone else—Kirk turned his eyes on me—with any influence on the conservative movement.

But that, Goldwater said, is the problem. Consider this, he exaggerated: "Every other person in Phoenix is a member of the John Birch Society. Russell, I'm not talking about Commie-haunted apple pickers or cactus drunks, I'm talking about the highest cast of men of affairs. Any of you know who Frank Cullen Brophy is?"

I raised my hand. "I spent a lot of time with him. He was going to contribute capital to help found *National Review*. He didn't." Brophy was a prominent Arizona banker.

Goldwater said he knew nothing about that, but added that Brophy certainly was aware of Goldwater's personal enthusiasm for the magazine and especially for its Washington editor, Brent Bozell. "Why isn't Brent here?" he turned to Baroody.

"He's in Spain."

"Well, our—my—*Conscience of a Conservative* continues to sell." Bozell, who was also my brother-in-law, had ghostwritten the book, which had given Goldwater a national profile.

Kirk said he could not imagine Bozell disagreeing on the need to excommunicate the John Birch Society from the conservative movement.

But this brought another groan from Goldwater. "You just can't do that kind of thing in Arizona. For instance, who on earth can dismiss Frank Brophy from *anything*?"

TIME WAS given to the John Birch Society lasting through lunch, and the subject came up again the next morning. We resolved that conservative leaders should do something about the John Birch Society. An allocation of responsibilities crystallized.

Goldwater would seek out an opportunity to dissociate himself from the "findings" of the Society's leader, without, however, casting any aspersions on the Society itself. I, in *National Review* and in my other writing, would continue to expose Welch and his thinking to scorn and derision. "You know how to do that," said Jay Hall.

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I volunteered to go further. Unless Welch himself disowned his operative fallacy, *National Review* would oppose any support for the society.

"How would you define the Birch fallacy?" Jay Hall asked.

"The fallacy," I said, "is the assumption that you can infer subjective intention from objective consequence: we lost China to the Communists, therefore the President of the United States and the Secretary of State wished China to go to the Communists."

"I like that," Goldwater said.

What would Russell Kirk do? He was straightforward. "Me? I'll just say, if anybody gets around to asking me, that the guy is loony and should be put away."

"Put away in Alaska?" I asked, mock-seriously. The wisecrack traced to Robert Welch's expressed conviction, a year or so earlier, that the state of Alaska was being prepared to house anyone who doubted his doctrine that fluoridated water was a Communist-backed plot to weaken the minds of the American public.

IN THE next issue of my magazine, *National Review*, I published a 5,000-word excoriation of Welch:

> How can the John Birch Society be an effective political instrument while it is led by a man whose views on current affairs are, at so many critical points . . . so far removed from common sense? That dilemma weighs on conservatives across America. . . . The underlying problem is whether conservatives can continue to acquiesce quietly in a rendition of the causes of the decline of the Republic and the entire Western world which is false, and, besides that, crucially different in practical emphasis from their own.

In response, *National Review* received the explicit endorsement of Senator Goldwater himself, who wrote a letter we published in the following issue:

> I think you have clearly stated the problem which Mr. Welch's continued leadership of the John Birch Society poses for sincere conservatives. . . . Mr. Welch is only one man, and I do not believe his views, far removed from reality and common sense as they are, represent the feelings of most members of the John Birch Society. . . . Because of this, I believe the best thing Mr. Welch could do to serve the cause of anti-Communism in the United States would be to resign. . . . We cannot allow the emblem of irresponsibility to attach to the conservative banner.

The wound we Palm Beach plotters delivered to the John Birch Society proved fatal over time. Barry Goldwater did not win the presidency, but he clarified the proper place of anti-Communism on the Right, with bright prospects to follow.

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Observations

No Game for Old Men

Abraham Socher

Kiki Cuyler was a terrific right-fielder for the Pittsburgh Pirates and the Chicago Cubs in the 1920's and 30's, a Johnny Damon-type player with speed and extra-base power. In 1925 he hit .357 and led the National League in triples and runs scored. From 1926 through 1930, he led the league in stolen bases in every year but one. In the mid-30's, after an injury, Cuyler started to slow down. He played his last season with the Brooklyn Dodgers as a second-string outfielder, and was out of the majors by the age of forty.

A couple of years later, Cuyler's son was offered a spot on a minor-league team. According to the baseball historian Bill James, Kiki knew that his son was not good enough, and wanted to spare him the pain of finding out. "Look, son," he said, "I had to leave the major leagues because my legs have gone back on me, and that's why I'm through as a player. But I'll race you a hundred yards. If you beat me, I'll say it's all right to go ahead. If I beat you, you'll give it up." Kiki won by fifteen yards, going away.

Nowadays, to judge by former U.S. Senator George Mitchell's recently delivered 409-page *Report to the Commissioner of Baseball of an Independent Investigation Into the Illegal Use of Steroids and Other Performance-Enhancing Substances by Players in Major League Baseball*, a player like Kiki, and maybe even his son, would have other options.

Performance-enhancing drugs are most tempting to players at the margins of talent, health, and, perhaps most of all, age. A minor leaguer—especially one who is not a power hitter—can muscle up to get to the majors. A good pitcher can move into the superstar category by throwing a faster fastball. With the use of anabolic steroids, a great hitter can build extraordinary muscle mass, increase his endurance, and prolong his dominance. For older players, human-growth hormone (HGH) can speed the healing after an injury, help tired bodies bounce back from workouts, and prevent the muscle deterioration that comes with age.

In fact, aside from sudden changes in physique or increases in home runs and other "power" statistics, the easiest way to tell if a baseball player is, as they say, on the juice is if his career does *not* describe an arc more or less like Kiki Cuyler's: peaking in the mid- to late twenties, plateauing for a few years, and in decline by the mid- to late thirties. A truly great player like Willie Mays might peak earlier and plateau for longer, but the shape of the curve is—not coincidentally—as inexorable as death.

Or at least it was until recently. Mays's first great year was 1954, when he was twenty-three. His last excellent year was thirteen years later in 1966. When, as a child, I saw him play at Candlestick Park in 1971, his legs, like Kiki Cuyler's, had "gone back" on him, and his play was quickly deteriorating.

As it happens, the modern-day player most comparable to Willie Mays is his godson Barry Bonds. But Bonds had the best offensive year of his or arguably anyone's career at the advanced age of thirty-six, hitting a staggering 73 home runs. Indeed, Bonds is unique in having played his five best years after the age of thirty-five, which is

Abraham Socher, *who teaches at Oberlin College, reviewed James Kugel's* How to Read the Bible *in our December 2007 issue.*

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to say—again not coincidentally—after he is alleged to have begun taking anabolic steroids.

SENATOR MITCHELL'S report was commissioned by the corporation known as Major League Baseball, which happens to be a principal beneficiary of the rekindled public interest in the game induced by steroids-powered record-breaking. On those grounds alone, expectations for the report were not exactly high to begin with. Although Mitchell begins on a strong note—"there has been widespread illegal use of anabolic steroids and other performance-enhancing substances by players in Major League Baseball, in violation of federal law and baseball policy"—and although he and his team uncovered some striking new facts and allegations, the report was no surprise to anyone who had been paying attention over the last couple of decades.

Twenty years ago, in the *Washington Post*, the sports columnist Tom Boswell remarked of José Canseco, then a speedy young power-hitter with the Oakland A's, that he was the best example of a player "who has become great through steroids." By his own later account in *Juiced* (2005), Canseco was the Johnny Appleseed of anabolic steroids. In the late 80's, he introduced them to teammates, including Mark McGwire. "It was really no big deal," Canseco writes. "We would just slip away, get our syringes and vials, and head into the bathroom." A few years later, playing for the Texas Rangers, he was injecting Rafael Palmeiro, Juan Gonzalez, and Ivan Rodriguez, each of whom improved significantly as a home-run hitter.

Other players learned of the good news from elsewhere. Around the same time, outfielder Lenny Dykstra of the Philadelphia Phillies was cheerily attributing his off-season addition of 30-odd pounds of muscle to working with free weights and "really good vitamins." In 1996, Brady Anderson, a lead-off hitter for the Baltimore Orioles who had never managed more than 21 home runs in a season, suddenly hit 50—a feat that Hank Aaron, Ted Williams, and Reggie Jackson never achieved.

TWO YEARS later, in the midst of Mark McGwire's spectacular 1998 duel with Sammy Sosa to break the season record of 61 home runs, a reporter noticed a bottle of androstenedione in McGwire's locker. "Andro" is a prohormone, which, while legal in baseball at the time, was designed, like anabolic steroids, artificially to raise the athlete's level of testosterone. An earlier version had been used by the big-shouldered East German Olympic women's teams of yore and was already banned in football and the Olympics.

The *New York Times* ran the story under the headline, "The News Is Out: Popeye Spikes His Spinach," though by then McGwire looked more like Bluto. He ended the season with 70 home runs, ten more than Babe Ruth had hit in 1927 and nine more than Roger Maris in 1961. Contemplating his achievement, McGwire famously remarked that he was "like, in awe of myself."

So was major-league baseball, which had been languishing after the disastrous strike-shortened season of 1994, and was now regaining its status as America's pastime. And so were others. According to the reporters Mark Fainaru-Wada and Lance Williams in *Game of Shadows* (2006), the certainty that McGwire was using much more than over-the-counter "andro" was what helped convince Barry Bonds to find a trainer who would supervise a serious steroids and weight-training regimen. Within three years, Bonds had broken McGwire's single-season record.

In the fall of 2000, interviewed on a nationally syndicated radio show, Jason Giambi of the Oakland A's spoke with a jocularity bordering on candor about his own massive physique and repeatedly referred to Barry Bonds, then in the first year of his great steroids-fueled run, as a "cartoon character." Major League Baseball was evidently not listening. In response to the increase in home runs that year, Commissioner Bud Selig requested an investigation into the manufacture and composition of baseballs. The investigative team took a trip to the Rawlings plant in Costa Rica and found that the cork centers of the balls were not being "juiced." Nobody asked whether the players were.

Others, however, were paying attention. In 2003, both Giambi and Bonds came under investigation for their patronage of the Bay Area Laboratory Cooperative (BALCO), which specialized in undetectable boutique steroids. The ongoing BALCO scandal, together with the debacle of congressional hearings in 2005 in which McGwire brokenly repeated that he would not "talk about the past" and Rafael Palmeiro defiantly insisted that he had never used steroids, only to test positive shortly thereafter, led in turn to the commissioning of Mitchell's report.

THE REPORT goes over this and a great deal more public information. None of it is news: the pharmacological genie has long been out of the bottle, and the use of steroids in other sports, most prominently track-and-field and cycling, is well known. Why should baseball be any different? As a minor leaguer told the writer Will Carroll, "if shooting bull piss was going to get me ten more home runs, fine." No amount of congressional harrumphing, "Say-it-ain't-so, Joe" pleas from broken-hearted youngsters, or reports of awful side effects (shrunken testicles, a literally inflated head, uncontrollable rage, severe depression, immunosuppression, cancer) will change this.

Still, the report is valuable for the wealth and specificity of its detail. This is largely due to the cooperation of Kirk Radomski, a former New York Mets batboy and

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clubhouse employee, and his customer Brian McNamee, formerly a strength coach for the Toronto Blue Jays and the New York Yankees. Radomski signed a plea agreement with the U.S. Attorney's office in which he admitted to selling anabolic steroids, HGH, and amphetamines to dozens of major-league players from 1995 through 2005. McNamee signed a similar agreement. Both face further charges if they can be shown to have lied to investigators.

What Radomski and McNamee's testimony revealed was not an organized conspiracy but more like a high school with rampant drug use. There were overlapping groups of incompetent dealers and giddy users exchanging drugs, information, and misinformation. Steroids and syringes were delivered by Federal Express to players at the clubhouse, kept in their lockers, and used in the bathrooms. Private "trainers" had wide access to the clubhouse.

All this was abetted by very lax discipline on the part of Major League Baseball—understandable enough, since, at least in the short term, it profited from the practice. Team officials privately discussed which players they thought were on steroids. Thus, in notes from a Los Angeles Dodgers meeting reproduced by Mitchell, the talk came around to Paul Lo Duca: "Got off the steroids . . . took away a lot [of] hard line drives." This was said more in sorrow over the lost hits than in anger over illegal doping. Meanwhile, the Players Association strenuously resisted testing for drugs and seems to have tipped off its members to impending tests. Mitchell notes elsewhere that teams failing to report information about their players' use of banned substances were liable to a $2 million fine. None has ever been assessed.

Of course, the biggest headlines about the report have concerned Roger Clemens, who was trained by Brian McNamee. As with Bonds, Clemens's career path had described a trajectory similar to that of previous great players—until the "decline phase" of middle age, when suddenly it shot up like a rocket. McNamee asserted that he administered a variety of steroids and, for a while, HGH to Clemens. But in a series of increasingly vociferous and not entirely plausible staged events designed to protect his reputation as the greatest pitcher of his generation, Clemens has denied taking steroids. The truth is that Roger Clemens *is* the greatest pitcher of his generation—albeit someone who, just like the greatest hitter of his generation, does appear to have called on artificial aids.

Seeing Bud Selig piously endorse before Congress the findings and recommendations of the Mitchell report, one was inevitably reminded of the scene in *Casablanca* in which Captain Renault announces he is "shocked, shocked" to discover gambling (read: doping) going on even as he collects his winnings. One question is just how long major-league baseball can continue to cash in. But a more interesting question, at least for the serious fan as 2008 spring training begins, is what all this means for our enjoyment of the game.

W.H. Auden has some nice lines about watching someone who has found an activity at which he excels:

> You need not see what someone is doing
> to know if it is his vocation,
> you have only to watch his eyes:
> a cook mixing a sauce, a surgeon
> making a primary incision,
> a clerk completing a bill of lading,
> wear the same rapt expression,
> forgetting themselves in a function.
> How beautiful it is,
> that eye on the object look.

Watching Barry Bonds at bat during his spectacular steroids-fueled run was like that. One saw what it really meant to "keep your eye on the ball." He stood at the plate, massive, poised, and discerning, with that eye-on-the-object look: ready to hit anything hittable but willing to walk if the pitch was even minimally off the plate. In 2004, Bonds got on base better than 60 percent of the time, breaking Ted Williams's record when he hit .406 and walked 147 times in 1941.

There is a story about Williams at bat toward the end of his career. With each pitch, the young catcher for the opposing team complains to the umpire: "You call that a ball?" After the third such complaint, the umpire replies: "Young man, when your pitcher throws a strike, Mr. Williams will let you know." Watching Bonds was like that, too, or at least as close as those of us too young to have seen Williams are ever going to get to seeing a baseball player hit with seemingly effortless precision and power. He was both rapt and ready, forgetting himself in the function of hitting. This is the beauty to be had in sports: to see a human being perfectly adapt his body to the arbitrary, almost impossible requirements of a game in unrehearsed real time.

But if that is so, why should I, as a fan, resent Bonds for, at great cost to his own body and reputation, affording me the experience of such beauty? To return to the *New York Times*'s favorite literary allusion, why should we cheer Popeye but boo Barry? Or, perhaps closer to home, why do we root for Joe Hardy in the musical comedy *Damn Yankees* when he makes a Faustian bargain to exchange his broken-down, middle-aged body for that of a brilliant young ballplayer? In fact the case for Bonds is stronger, since, no matter what "performance-enhancing" drugs were involved, no one else in major-league baseball could have become the hitter he became.

In short, what is wrong with the libertarian argument to which Bonds himself has sometimes gestured? What is wrong with just letting "the show," as players call the

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major leagues, be a show—and not worrying about what goes on backstage?

One way to see the weakness of this argument is by means of a thought experiment. Last spring, in a spectacular lapse of taste and good judgment, ESPN began airing a "reality television show" on Bonds's pursuit of Hank Aaron's all-time home-run record. Called "Bonds on Bonds," the show, which was eventually canceled, gave supposed behind-the-scenes glimpses into his preparations for the game. Imagine if this had included the carefully calibrated and charted ministrations of Bonds's personal trainer Greg Anderson. If it is a Monday, Wednesday, or Friday, then an HGH belly-button shot. On Mondays and Wednesdays, BALCO's undetectable designer drug "The Clear" is placed under the tongue. On Tuesdays, "The Cream" is massaged onto the elbow. The three-week cycle would end with a climactic Clomid pill, and then viewers could be treated to the suspense of wondering whether Bonds's power would drop during the off-week before the next cycle began.

THE POINT IS that it is important to us that great athletes push the limits of human achievement. But it has to be *human* achievement. Seeing Bonds in batting practice or on the weight machines in his pre-steroid days might have been boring, but at least these exercises would have had an internal relationship to the athletic virtues of strength, speed, and coordination that he demonstrated on the field. Performance-enhancing drugs are literally, even sickeningly, external.

It is not as if someone other than Mark McGwire hit 70 home runs in 1998; but it is not quite as if the middle-aged McGwire did, either. He may have intuited something like this in his apparently fatuous remark that he was "in awe" of himself. Awe is not really an attitude one can feel toward oneself. Perhaps he was in awe of the body he had become.

We have, in brief, a kind of reverse-Frankenstein problem: not has the monster become human, but has the human become monstrous? And are we as interested in seeing these players throw fastballs and hit home runs once we know that monsters or virtual post-humans is what they are? This is a particular problem in baseball, where numbers—60, 61, .406—stand for iconic achievements and serve as landmarks in the history and tradition of the game. Can the tradition hold together if the numbers change with the speed of pharmaceutical advances?

The steroids scandal is unique in the history of baseball. It involves no cheating on the field; no spitballs, no fixing of games. It may have been so widespread that it did not even upset the overall competitive balance of play. Finally, unlike the cocaine scandals of the 80's, it most certainly did not result in worse play on the field. Nonetheless, if the loosely Aristotelian argument I have been suggesting is correct, this scandal could kill or at least radically transform our understanding and appreciation of what baseball, and sport more generally, is. Indeed, it may already have happened.

WHEN WILLIE MAYS was a teenager he played on a factory team in Alabama with his father, who was called Kitty Kat because of his grace in the field. Kitty Kat was in his mid-thirties and Willie was sixteen. In his autobiography, Mays described the last time they played together. A batter hit a sinking liner to left center:

> I heard my father say "all right, all right, let me take it." But then I knew that the ball was sinking and he was too far back, and I saw that if I cut in front of him, I could handle it, so I did and caught it off the grasstops.

A. Bartlett Giamatti, the late commissioner of baseball, who, unlike Bud Selig, revered baseball and could turn a phrase, spoke of the game as an arcadia in which the play was "graceful, energetic, and free in the order and law of a green field." As a Renaissance scholar, Giamatti would also have known that there is death, or at least a hint of it, even in arcadia. This is a lesson that, if it is not too late, baseball should learn and teach its players. Like Kiki Cuyler, Willie Mays, Sr. knew it. He never played again.

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OBSERVATIONS

Going Highbrow at the CIA

Terry Teachout

ONCE UPON a time, the Central Intelligence Agency was a near-omnipotent, immaculately stealthy organization of serious-minded men who stood watch over the West—or so, at any rate, it was portrayed in the novels and films through which most Americans received (and continue to receive) their idea of what the CIA once was and did. In the popular British spy stories that Ian Fleming published between 1953 and 1964, Felix Leiter, James Bond's opposite number in Washington, is invariably drawn as a stalwart, resourceful colleague. In Fleming's sensational pages, moreover, the cold war itself is presented not as a meaningless skirmish between interchangeably shabby mid-level functionaries but as a noble battle between good and evil.

Nowadays, of course, the CIA is usually portrayed in a different light—and not just because of the recent public disclosure that its agents may have tortured suspected Islamic terrorists in order to obtain information from them. For a long time now it has been widely assumed, even by some whose ideology might otherwise incline them to approve of its activities, that the CIA is at once unscrupulous and incompetent, a faceless bureaucracy of bunglers and malefactors.

What caused this change in image? The answer to that question could fill a book. But one of the most interesting and least understood aspects of the transformation is the role played by the revelations made in 1967 and afterward that, for the previous two decades, the CIA had been secretly funding a large number of organizations, including the AFL-CIO and the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), whose purpose, in whole or part, was to oppose the spread of Soviet influence in the West.

These revelations helped persuade a generation of left-wing intellectuals that the CIA was evil and that all who benefited from its largess were thereby tainted. In due course, this conviction led to such exercises in absurdity as Serge Guilbaut's *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, a 1984 book arguing that Abstract Expressionist painting was in some meaningful sense a right-wing movement because its practitioners had been touted by CIA-supported front groups as symbols of American freedom of expression.[1]

A fair amount has been written in recent years about the complex relationship between the agency and those front groups, most of it tendentious in the extreme. Not so *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America*, a new book by Hugh Wilford, an associate professor of history at California State University.[2] For an academic exercise, *The Mighty Wurlitzer* offers a surprisingly neutral account.

The title of Wilford's book is a CIA-coined metaphor for the agency's presumed ability to mold public opinion by "playing" its many fronts like a giant theater organ. But Wilford argues that the CIA's ability to exert control over the organizations it funded was—to put it mildly—imperfect:

> The example of the U.S. front groups created in the early years

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[1] See Lionel Abel's "Paint & Politics," COMMENTARY, July 1984.

[2] Harvard, 342 pp., $27.95.

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> of the cold war suggests that such operations do not necessarily entail cynical manipulation and passive obedience. . . . Moreover, the CIA could not always dictate how the money it secretly disbursed was spent, with left-wing literati sometimes purloining it for purposes that had little or nothing to do with the superpower conflict.

Even a casual reading of the evidence adduced in *The Mighty Wurlitzer* points to the truth of this statement. An earlier and highly biased book on the CIA's cultural activities, by Frances Stonor Saunders, was titled *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War*. Wilford begs to differ with its premise, and he does so persuasively: "The CIA might have tried to call the tune," he writes, "but the piper did not always play it, nor the audience dance to it."

IN CONTRAST to most previous discussions of the CIA's front-group operations, which have tended to concentrate narrowly on culture and the arts, *The Mighty Wurlitzer* covers a much wider range of activities. Wilford is especially good, for example, on the agency's dealings with sympathetic American journalists like the political columnist Joseph Alsop and Arthur Hays Sulzberger, who served as publisher of the *New York Times* from 1935 to 1961. For culture-minded readers, however, the most interesting section will likely be the fourth and fifth chapters, in which Wilford explores the various ways in which the CIA backed anti-Communist artists and intellectuals.

Much of this support was funneled through the Paris-based Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF). Its best-remembered undertaking was *Encounter*, a staunchly anti-Communist literary magazine, published in London, that was founded by Irving Kristol and Stephen Spender and later edited by Melvin J. Lasky. The CCF also collaborated with the Museum of Modern Art to send exhibitions of contemporary American paintings to Europe, stepping in to fill the financial gap when right-wing American Congressmen campaigned to block the State Department from sponsoring such exhibitions on the grounds that they propagated the work of left-wing artists who constituted (in the words of one lawmaker) a "pen-and-brush phalanx of the Communist conspiracy."

No less intriguing is Wilford's discussion of the agency's ventures into the manipulation of middlebrow culture. In addition to providing most of the funding for an animated film version of *Animal Farm*, George Orwell's anti-Stalinist fable, the CIA planted an operative inside Paramount Pictures. "In one letter," Wilford writes, "he reports having excised a gag involving 'the manhandling of Muslim women,' which might have had 'potentially disastrous results in the Muslim world,' from a Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin comedy, *Money from Home*. Another operative worked directly with the writer-director Joseph L. Mankiewicz to shape the film version of Graham Greene's novel *The Quiet American*—or rather, in Mankiewicz's words, "completely [to] change the anti-American attitude" of the original book.

The CIA was as interested in intellectual discourse as it was in art and literature, at least so long as the intellectuals in question were anti-Communists and so long as they were presentable in liberal company. The agency cut them off when they grew too fervent—as was the case with the American Committee for Cultural Freedom (ACCF), whose "hard" brand of anti-Communism became an embarrassment to the CCF, its parent organization. It was for this reason that such well-known ex-Communists as James Burnham and Sidney Hook became disillusioned with the CIA and its covert activities, concluding that the agency was unwilling to wage a true *Kulturkampf* against Soviet Communism and that they themselves "had a much better understanding of the cold war enemy than [did] the U.S. government, claiming what almost amounted to ownership rights to anti-Stalinism."

Little evidence exists, however, to suggest that the CIA was ever capable of laying down anything like a party line to its highbrow collaborators. The fact is, as Wilford explains, that "the CIA's semi-private network was built to a great extent on shared values and involved a surprising amount of self-assertion on the part of the private citizens who belonged to it." Those who cooperated with the CIA did so not merely because it was in their financial interest to do so but because they believed that the agency was on their side. They needed no prompting to oppose Communism: many of them were themselves ex-Communists, and all of them had seen what Communism could do.

Contrary to the view of many latter-day leftist commentators, the CCF was by no means a politically conservative organization. To the contrary: the longer it lasted, the further to the Left it tilted.[3] Nor was the CIA's own institutional culture in the 50's and 60's a conservative one—any more than it is now. From its earliest days, the agency was the preserve of Ivy League-educated liberal internationalists who were more comfortable with labor leaders and abstract painters than with populist politicians. Hence there should have been nothing surprising, let alone shocking, about the CIA's open-handed patronage of modern art and literature.[4]

But of course there was.

[3] See "The Intellectuals & the Cold War" by George Szamuely, COMMENTARY, December 1989.

[4] The agency was less generous to avant-garde American musicians. This was presumably because Nicolas Nabokov, the émigré Russian composer (and cousin of Vladimir Nabokov) who doubled as the CCF's general secretary, was himself a composer of strongly conservative inclination who had no use for non-tonal music.

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WHICH BRINGS us to the question of why any of this should matter. In the long run, was there anything wrong with the CIA's decision to set up anti-Communist front groups and fund other organizations in order to combat Soviet influence at home and abroad? After all, the Russians were the bad guys in the cold war, and they stopped at nothing in their quest to work their will on the world.

Indeed, the model for the CIA's "Mighty Wurlitzer" was the hard-Left Popular Front of the 30's and 40's, the members of whose constituent organizations were not always aware that they were funded and controlled by agents of the Soviet Union. Were we mistaken to use similar methods to oppose them? Did the end—the collapse of Communism—fail to justify the sometimes dubious means in which the U.S. engaged so as to bring it about?

When it comes to cultural matters, the best answer to this question may have been given by Arnold Beichman. A member of the executive committee of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, Beichman, as *The Mighty Wurlitzer* tells us, opposed its decision to take the CIA's money "not so much for moral reasons as because I felt certain that someday the whole tawdry business would be exposed." In saying this, Beichman was responding to a 1985 letter by Diana Trilling, another ACCF member, who retrospectively justified her decision to look the other way on the following grounds:

> I did not believe that to take the support of my government was a dishonorable act. Nobody did at that period—that interpretation is the result of a significant change in our political culture. I never liked the secrecy but was willing to live with it because I thought we were doing useful work.

It is hard to disagree with Mrs. Trilling's point of view, but it now appears that Beichman may have made the smarter call. For, whatever good came of the activities of the CIA's front groups, a strong case can be made that it was largely if not entirely canceled out by the loss of credibility resulting from the disclosure that these seemingly independent organizations had been funded by the U.S. government. Unlike the Voice of America, which never pretended to be anything other than a government agency, groups like the CCF and the AFL-CIO were assumed to be acting on their own. This independence was what made them so effective—and what the CIA counted on when it funneled cash to them. But once they were exposed as recipients of agency money, and despite the fact that most their members knew nothing about the source of their funds, their influence dwindled accordingly.

THE CONSEQUENCES of this exposure would be far-reaching. In *Barcelona*, Whit Stillman's witty, discreetly conservative 1994 film about the romantic adventures of a pair of expatriate American preppies in Europe, we meet a group of cynical young Europeans whose notions about the CIA are diametrically opposed to those of their new friends. One of the Europeans patronizingly explains that "the AFL-CIA [sic] and the American labor unions" had been "sent to Europe to crush progressive unionism . . . with sacks of money and the anti-Communist tactics of Joe McCarthy." Stillman plays the scene for laughs, but the real joke, as he knows perfectly well, is that the impenetrably self-righteous Europeans, lecturing their naïve American friends about the nefarious activities of the CIA, have hold of a small corner of the truth.

European anti-Americanism is too complex a phenomenon to be explained in a sentence or two. But there can be little doubt that the exposure of the CIA's front activities did much to fan its flames, and to keep them fanned. By the same token, it seems more than likely that (to cite only one revealing instance) the current hostility of the *New York Times* toward the CIA has to some degree been exacerbated by the fact that under Arthur Hays Sulzberger, "the *Times* provided at least ten CIA officers with cover as reporters or clerical staff in its foreign bureaus, while genuine employees of the paper were encouraged to pass on information to the Agency about, for example, potential foreign agents." Hell hath no fury like a journalist suckered.

Might things have turned out differently had the CIA not been caught filling the cookie jars of its front groups? Perhaps. But it seems as likely that the agency's exposure was all but inevitable. The embarrassing (if not entirely unflattering) truth is that Americans as a group do not seem to make good conspirators. We are by nature a nation of Daisy Millers, as open and guileless as the idealistic heroine of Henry James's eponymous 1878 novella, disinclined to cynicism and incapable of keeping secrets. This is why the hard-nosed, who-gets-what style of foreign policy known as "realism" has never been embraced by more than a small minority of Americans—and why sooner or later the CIA was bound to get caught when it started pulling cultural strings in the name of freedom.

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Books in Review

Mussolini's Ghosts?

Liberal Fascism:
The Secret History of the American Left from Mussolini to the Politics of Meaning

by Jonah Goldberg

Doubleday. 487 pp. $27.95

Reviewed by
James Nuechterlein

PEOPLE ON the Left who have not yet been rhetorically housebroken, or who have simply forgotten their manners, have a habit of referring to conservatives as fascists. The insult is at once so over the top and yet so devoid of meaning that most of its targets tend to shrug it off as unworthy of notice. As long ago as 1946, George Orwell concluded that the epithet was an item of political juvenilia, with no substantive reference beyond "something not desirable."

But to the columnist Jonah Goldberg, a contributing editor of *National Review*, the term deserves to be taken very seriously indeed. In this book he not only repudiates its identification with conservatism but, as his title indicates, enthusiastically turns the accusation back on those who make it. It is modern American liberalism, he argues, both in its early-20th-century origins and in its subsequent manifestations, that actually betrays close family resemblances to European fascism.

This is not to say that Goldberg believes liberals have an affinity for storm troopers, *lebensraum* nationalism, or murderous anti-Semitism. "Milder, more friendly, more 'maternal'" than its Nazi or Italian predecessors, liberal fascism is less likely to grind people under an iron heel than to want to smother them in a nanny-state embrace.

Of course, even as modified, Goldberg's thesis will strike most liberals as preposterous and oxymoronic, and even non-liberals may find it profoundly counterintuitive. Yet his argument is worth attending to. If nothing else, it forces one to think about both liberalism and fascism in unaccustomed, provocative, and sometimes illuminating ways.

TAKE, TO begin with, Goldberg's insistence that fascism is in essence a movement of the Left. He traces its origins ultimately to the French Revolution, and to the revolutionaries' marriage of Rousseau's concept of the general will and Robespierre's terror. (Further trace elements are located by Goldberg in the ideas of, among others, Hegel, Darwin, Nietzsche, and Georges Sorel.) Coming closer to our time, he reminds us that Benito Mussolini, who formed Italy's fascist party, first won his title of *Il Duce* as the leader of Italian socialism, and even after switching allegiances did not become an economic conservative. In actuality, his new party's radical populism was far more akin to socialism than to capitalism.

So, too, with the Nazis. Theirs was, after all, the national-*socialist* party, and their platform, which Goldberg helpfully reprints in an appendix, amply reflected that fact. They also rightly considered themselves to be social revolutionaries, as scornful of the established conservative order as they were of Marxists.

Economics and anti-traditionalism are not everything, of course, and other elements of historical fas-

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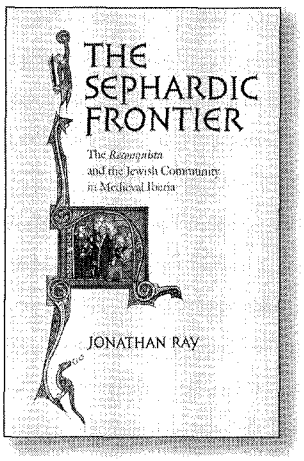

THE SEPHARDIC FRONTIER
The Reconquista *and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia*
JONATHAN RAY

"Using rabbinic sources and unpublished archives, Jonathan Ray brings Jewish settlement of the southern Iberian peninsula into clearer focus. This interesting and lively book challenges the image of medieval Spanish and Portuguese society as invariably corporate and religious in its organization."
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cism—militarism, radical nationalism, the "leader principle," disdain for political liberties and democratic governance—suggest why the Italian and German regimes are customarily located on the Right. But Goldberg's arguments do remind us that in some sense the European fascists were as they claimed to be: beyond the customary categories of Right and Left.

Fascism's contact point with American thought came in the early 1900's, at a moment when, as in Europe, the political, economic, and social institutions of liberal democracy were being widely dismissed as inadequate to the needs of modern industrial society. Singling out for examination such Progressives as Woodrow Wilson and Herbert Croly, Goldberg points to a number of ideas and attitudes they broadly shared with their European counterparts: nationalism, anti-individualism, economic corporatism, an impatience with parliamentary democracy and a correlative taste for strong leadership, and a yearning for communal spiritual regeneration inspired, led, and coordinated by the state. In connection with this last element—religion transmuted into utopian politics—Goldberg places significant emphasis on the Social Gospel movement, at one point referring to progressivism itself as "a kind of Christian fascism."

Given all this, it is hardly surprising to Goldberg that Progressives in the 1920's were intrigued by, and often openly admiring of, Mussolini's fascist experiment—or that, for his part, Mussolini declared himself an admirer of William James, whose pragmatic philosophy was favored by many Progressives. Still, as Goldberg concedes, progressivism and fascism, though common in inspiration, were not the same: cultural traditions made a difference, and the Progressives' fascist tendencies were tempered by America's "liberal, democratic, and egalitarian culture."

At one point, though, progressivism did in Goldberg's view take on the character of full-blown fascism. During World War I, he asserts, America became, "albeit temporarily," a fascist state and Woodrow Wilson "the 20th century's first fascist dictator." The crushing of dissent during the war involved a trampling of civil liberties quite without parallel in American history, and it happened under putatively liberal auspices.

IF THE Progressive era was, in Goldberg's telling, America's first fascist moment, Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal was the second. In fighting the Great Depression, FDR emphasized the same themes of economic planning and social control that had characterized Wilson's mobilization for war, and, in an echo of European fascism, depicted his New Deal itself as an experimental "Third Way" between capitalism and socialism. Indeed, Goldberg notes, comparisons of New Deal policies with fascism, from both the Left and the Right, were common in the 30's, and fascist motifs were readily visible in, for example, the paramilitary atmosphere of the Civilian Conservation Corps or the Nuremberg-style rallies to celebrate the National Recovery Administration.

In 1932, H. G. Wells, a Fabian socialist and a great fan of Roosevelt's, first promulgated the concept of a "liberal fascism" that would enlist fascist discipline and intensity in pursuit of enlightened social purposes. And, according to Goldberg, FDR himself, in speaking on behalf of "the forgotten man," showed how he shared with Hitler a vision of national community—embodied, even more in Germany than America, in a generous welfare state—that would, in Goldberg's words, "restore via an all-powerful [government] a sense of belonging to those lost in modern society." Although the differences among Germany, Italy, and America in the 1930's were finally greater than their similarities, Goldberg in-

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sists that those observers at the time who stressed the commonalities among the "three New Deals" were not imagining things.

In Goldberg's reconstruction, America's third fascist moment—in whose aftermath, he suggests, liberalism still dwells—occurred in the 1960's. "Much like the Nazi movement," he writes, the 60's version of liberal fascism "had two faces: the street radicals and the establishment radicals." Representatives of the former included the black-power movement (think Black Panthers) and the radical student protesters (think the Weathermen), among both of whom there existed, beneath much Marxist rhetoric, a species of brute thuggishness for which "fascist" seems an appropriate label.

Goldberg's "establishment radicals"—he distinguishes only intermittently between the radical New Left and liberal "New Politics" types—were those who, following the assassination of John F. Kennedy, put together Lyndon Johnson's Great Society program. This "fascist utopia," in Goldberg's view, marked the culmination of the Progressive/New Deal liberal vision:

> the quest to create an all-caring, all-powerful, all-encompassing state that assumes responsibility for every desirable outcome and takes the blame for every setback on the road to utopia, a state that finally replaces God.

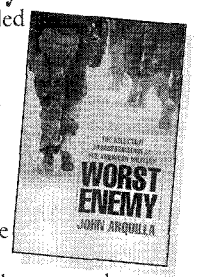
The pursuit of this fascist-inspired "God-state" is what, in Goldberg's view, modern liberalism is still all about.

In the final chapters of *Liberal Fascism*, Goldberg brings his arguments up to date in a series of critiques of today's liberal predilections and pieties. In a discussion of "liberal-fascist economics," for example, he argues that behind their anti-business rhetoric, liberals typically favor a form of corporatism—i.e., collusion between government and big business—of the kind first established in the Progressive era. Similarly, he ties contemporary liberal views of the welfare state, abortion, and multiculturalism to the eugenics movement that flourished in the United States in the first third of the 20th century and in which that era's liberals were deeply complicit. Skewering Hillary Rodham Clinton's best-selling book *It Takes a Village*, Goldberg identifies its embrace of the "politics of meaning" as a form of soft totalitarianism. In Clinton's feminized version of Mussolini's slogan "everything within the state, nothing outside the state," the mantra becomes "everything within the village"—in effect, a kind of fascism with a human face.

In his discussion of the nation's culture wars, Goldberg finds the ghost of fascism lurking everywhere. No matter what the subject—Hollywood films, religion in public life, cultural studies, witchcraft and paganism, moral relativism, environmentalism, public health, animal rights—he conjures up fascist roots for today's liberal inclinations. So pervasive, indeed, are fascist influences as finally to transcend ideology: conservatives cheer *Death Wish* and *Dirty Harry* as lustily as liberals cheer *Dead Poets Society* (a film that "a young Hitler would have given . . . a standing ovation"). In terms of popular culture, Goldberg suggests, "we're all fascists now."

That last line may have been intended only as a throwaway, but it points to a deeper problem in Goldberg's analysis. Once he is through exploring fascist influences, it is difficult to see who has not been affected by them. If liberal political figures in today's America are suspect, so by extension are the governments and elites of all the Western democracies. Even George Bush is implicated: in an afterword on "the tempting of conservatism," Goldberg refers knowingly to something he calls "compassionate fascism." By the end, it seems that the only political disposition exempt

John Arquilla
Worst Enemy



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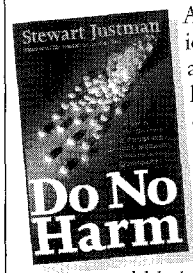

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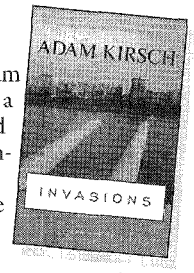

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from the fascist taint is the barely extant one of classical free-market liberalism, strictly construed.

The problem is obvious: if the fascist label applies to almost everything everywhere, how does it usefully apply to anything in particular? And that is not the only problem. Goldberg's efforts to find fascist analogues for today's liberal views are often severely strained. There is, for example, only the most tenuous relation between contemporary liberal support for abortion or multiculturalism and the fascist/Progressive preoccupation with eugenics.

Nor, without an improbable imaginative leap, can one identify liberal corporatism, even loosely, with the Nazi policy of *Gleichschaltung*, or coordination, according to which corporations obtained security for their operations in exchange for loyalty to the regime.

In Goldberg's uneasy blend of analysis and polemic, moreover, his ideological instincts too often intrude on his historical interpretations of specific movements and events. Anyone familiar with the history of progressivism and the New Deal will find his descriptions of them selective and overblown—in Woodrow Wilson's "fascist state," to take only one example, the legislative and judicial branches of government continued to operate unimpeded. Even those who share his distaste for the Great Society are likely to be given pause by his depiction of it as a form of God-state utopianism.

IT SEEMS, in the end, that in associating liberalism with fascism Goldberg has taken the incidental and partial for the essential. Both forms of politics are manifestations of collectivism, but that common response to modern conditions does not make them political soulmates. Beneath their joint collectivist instincts, liberalism and fascism are fundamentally at odds. To miss this is not so much to insult liberalism as to trivialize fascism.

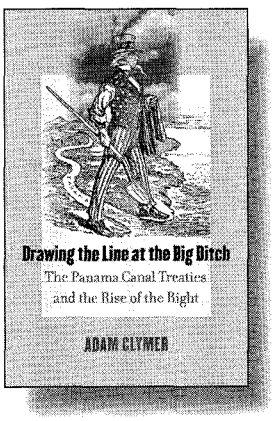
It is one thing to question aspects of democratic governance, as modern liberals sometimes did, and quite another to set out relentlessly and systematically, as an essential expression of what you are about, to destroy it root and branch. The point is not just that Woodrow Wilson was not a dictator; it is that he and his fellow Progressives—and those who came after them—were not fascists. Take away from fascism its authoritarian bloody-mindedness, and whatever it is you have left it isn't fascism, liberal or otherwise.

Jonah Goldberg is entirely right to insist that American conservatism has nothing serious to do with fascism. But he does not take his American exceptionalism far enough. Liberals, too, are protected by its immunities.

Drawing the Line at the Big Ditch

The Panama Canal Treaties and the Rise of the Right

Adam Clymer



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Persian Aversion

Treacherous Alliance:
The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the United States

by Trita Parsi

Yale. 384 pp. $28.00

Reviewed by
Nathan Thrall

WHAT LIES at the heart of the conflict between Israel and Iran? The usual answer is the virulently anti-Semitic ideology of the Islamic Revolution, whose founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, sev-

NATHAN THRALL, *a new contributor, has written on Arab-Israeli relations for the* Jerusalem Post *and on U.S.-Iranian relations for the* Middle East Review of International Affairs. *He is working on a history of Iraq's Dawa party.*

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ered ties with Israel when he came to power in February 1979. *Treacherous Alliance*, a new book by Trita Parsi, offers a radically different explanation.

Parsi heads the National Iranian American Council, a Washington lobby seeking to "foster greater understanding between Iran and the United States." *Treacherous Alliance* is an expansion of his 2006 Ph.D. dissertation at the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins. While hardly the first treatment of Israeli-Iranian relations, it is distinguished by the in-depth interviews Parsi conducted with 130 Israeli, Iranian, and American policymakers and analysts, offering a rare look behind diplomatic barriers erected nearly three decades ago.

Framed by an introduction and a conclusion containing policy prescriptions for the United States, *Treacherous Alliance* presents the nearly 60-year history of Israeli-Iranian relations in two parts, the division between them marked by the 1991 Gulf war and the more or less simultaneous end of the cold war. These two events, writes Parsi, were what turned Iran and Israel into the region's most powerful rivals for preeminence.

Defying the conventional view, though, Parsi argues that the conflict between the two countries was "not sparked by an ideological difference, nor is it ideological fervor that keeps it alive today." Instead, "the major transformations of Israeli-Iranian relations have all coincided" with large shifts in the geopolitical order. In *Treacherous Alliance*, he sets out to recount those transformations and assess responsibility for them.

Parsi's narrative begins in 1947, with Iran's vote in the United Nations against the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states. Although one might have supposed the Shah would have welcomed the establishment of Israel as another non-Arab, pro-Western state in the

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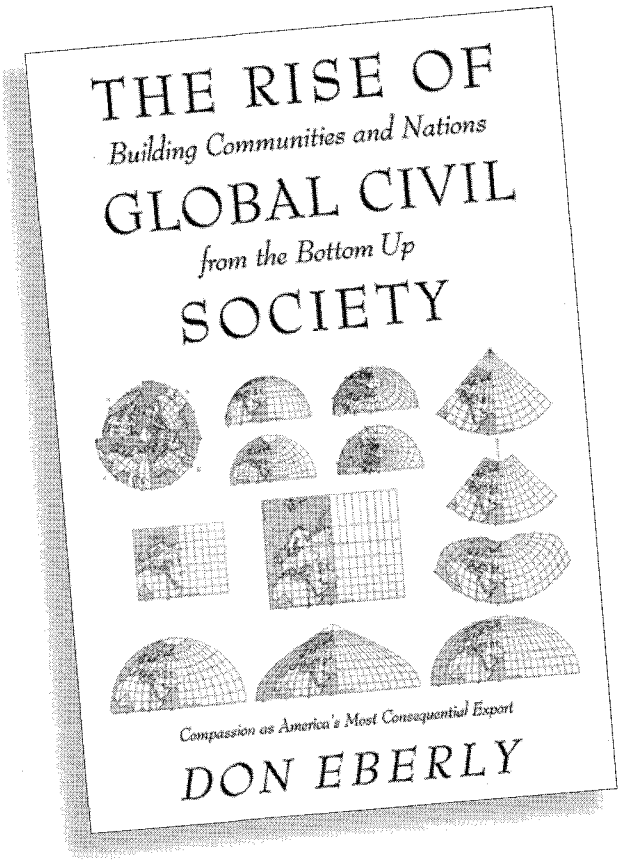

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region, he was wary of angering his neighbors and therefore adopted a policy of "calculated ambivalence." While never formally recognizing Israel, he offered de-facto recognition based on the two nations' many common interests.

Despite numerous setbacks and betrayals along the way, Iran and Israel cooperated over the years to create a joint ballistic-missile program, finance an Israeli oil pipeline, forge a military counterweight to the states that lay between them, and undercut the threat from Iraq by supporting the Kurdish rebellion in that country. The Shah also facilitated the escape of thousands of Iraqi Jews. For its part, Israel presented Iran with highly valued agricultural know-how and training, intelligence on Egyptian military movements and planning, and schooling for Iran's pilots, paratroopers, and artillery soldiers.

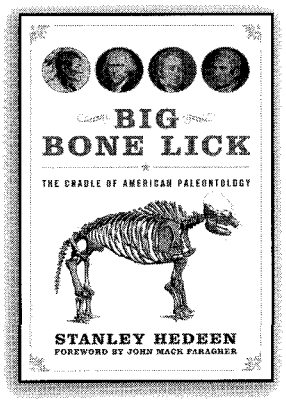
Admittedly, Parsi writes, things changed in 1979, when the Islamic Revolution brought with it the seizure of American diplomatic hostages and a severe reversal in Iran's policy toward Israel. But, he insists, Khomeini's "venomous rhetoric against Israel was just that—words." What with Saddam Hussein's September 1980 invasion of Iran, and the eight years of war that followed, the Islamic Republic "could ill afford a confrontation with the Jewish state." If anything, according to Parsi, Iran's conduct in that war demonstrated the supremacy of its national interests over its pan-Islamic ones: casting ideology aside, Khomeini's regime secretly purchased desperately needed arms from Israel.

As for Israel, many of its leaders believed Khomeini's regime was destined to fall and hoped that, by ignoring his bellicose rhetoric, they could restore an old alliance and weaken their common enemy—Iraq. Parsi quotes the alleged words of Yitzhak Rabin, then Israel's defense minister, in October 1987: "Iran is Israel's best friend, and we do not intend to change our position in relation to Tehran, because Khomeini's regime will not last forever." In any case, Parsi adds, how troublesome could Iran have been if Israel was arming it?

AFTER KHOMEINI'S death in 1989, Parsi continues, the surviving leaders of his war-torn regime sought to end their isolation and reestablish "the Shah's economic and—to some extent—politico-military ties to the West." Iran successfully secured the release of a number of American captives held in Lebanon by its proxy Hizballah, toned down its rhetoric against the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, lowered its profile on the Palestinian issue, and even cooperated with the American-led coalition during the 1991 Gulf war. Unfortunately, however, both Israel and the United States ignored these gestures—Washington, out of arrogance, stupidity, and bitter memories of the 1979 hostage crisis; Israel, out of calculated but short-sighted self-interest.

After Saddam's army was driven out of Kuwait and crushed in 1991, Parsi explains, Israel no longer needed Iran as a check on the Iraqi threat; instead, it came to view the Islamic Republic as a strategic rival. Meanwhile, the collapse of the Soviet Union was seen by Israel as potentially undermining its strategic value to Washington, a value further eroded by the possibility of "a breakthrough in U.S.-Iranian ties," which "could wipe out what little strategic significance Israel retained." An alarmed Israeli government therefore organized a campaign to "convince the United States and the EU that Iran was a global threat."

Soon enough, "in response to Israeli pressure—and not to Iranian actions—Washington's rhetoric on Iran began to mirror Israel's talking



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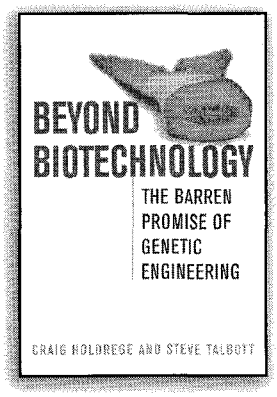

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points." The effect of all this on the Islamic Republic was predictable and understandable:

> Convinced that Washington wouldn't grant Iran its legitimate role in the region, Tehran concluded that it was left with no choice but to make America's non-recognition as costly as possible by sabotaging its policies.

With its efforts at international re-integration having been consistently rebuffed, Tehran began to push back against Western plans for a post-cold-war order in the Middle East. Primary among those plans was the Oslo peace process, launched in 1993, which Tehran vociferously opposed. Here, for the first time, the Islamic Republic's strategic and ideological interests could be said to have overlapped.

Yet even so, Parsi stresses, over the ensuing years and right up to the present, the logic of the rivalry between Israel and Iran remains unchanged. It is a strategic contest for regional preeminence, and ideology has had little to do with it.

The intriguing thesis of this book rests on three principal claims: that during the cold war, the Islamic Republic's opposition to Israel was limited to rhetoric; that after Khomeini's death in 1989, Iran's conciliatory gestures to the West were ignored; and that as a result of these rejections, Iran decided at the time of the 1993 Oslo accords to begin supporting Palestinian rejectionist groups. There are problems with each of these assertions.

During the period of its war with Iraq, Parsi writes, Iran vehemently denounced the Jewish state "without translating that rhetoric into practical efforts." But any such claim is repeatedly disproved by the existence of Hizballah, the Lebanese Shiite Islamist group that Iran fostered in the 1980's. In November 1983, just twelve days after bombing the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, Hizballah's Islamic Jihad

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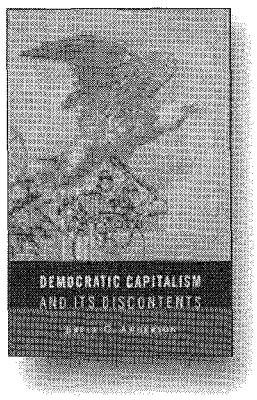

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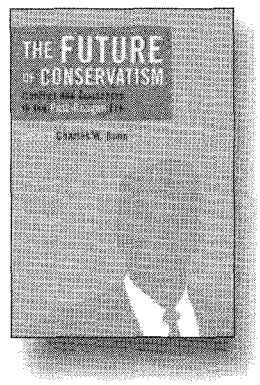

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wing claimed responsibility for killing at least five dozen people in a suicide truck-bombing of Israel's military and intelligence headquarters in Tyre, Lebanon—an event, like many other Hizballah attacks during the 1980's, that Parsi excludes from his narrative.

Next, Parsi asserts that as a result of Khomeini's death in 1989, Iran took steps toward a rapprochement with the West. With regard to the Israel-Palestinian dispute in particular, he cites a declaration by Hashemi Rafsanjani, the "pragmatist" elected as Iran's president two months after Khomeini's death, to the effect that Iran would agree to any solution acceptable to the Palestinians. But Parsi does not provide us with an actual quotation; nor does he share a more famous one from the same year, in which Rafsanjani urged Palestinians to hijack airplanes, blow up Western factories, threaten U.S. interests throughout the world, and "kill and execute—and not just inside Palestine—five Americans or Britons or French" for every martyr of their own.

More tangible evidence of Iran's supposed desire for reunification with the West is provided in Parsi's depiction of the 1991 release of the last remaining American hostages in Lebanon, an overture that, he claims, went unreciprocated by the U.S. In fact, as Rafsanjani would go on tacitly to acknowledge, Washington gave the Islamic Republic $278 million and an official statement clearing it of involvement in the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am passenger jet over Lockerbie, Scotland.

More to the point, Iran had engineered the release of the American hostages only after the disappearance of the central rationale for holding them. Throughout the arms-for-hostages negotiations of 1985 and 1986, Iran's primary demands had included the release from prison of the Tehran-backed militants who had bombed the U.S. and French embassies in Kuwait in 1983. In fact, they were finally released from a Kuwaiti prison during Saddam's 1990 invasion of that country. In the words of the UN's chief negotiator at the time, "Unwittingly, the president of Iraq had untied the most difficult knot of the entire hostage saga in one fell swoop." Parsi omits all of this.

According to Parsi, one of post-Khomeini Iran's most important conciliatory gestures occurred during the 1991 Gulf war, when the Islamic Republic "refrained from aiding the uprising of Iraq's Shiite population against Saddam"—thus abetting the first Bush administration's evident reluctance to press on to Baghdad. So welcome was this conduct that it "even won praise from U.S. Secretary of State James Baker." Parsi fails to mention Baker's rather contrary assessment of this same event in his 1995 book, *The Politics of Diplomacy*:

> Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani called for Saddam to resign, and appealed to the Iraqi citizenry to rise against its discredited leaders. Throughout this period, Iran made several such appeals urging the overthrow of Saddam by the Shiites.

Finally, Parsi argues that after the U.S. had repeatedly shunned Iran's overtures, Israel's Labor government, elected in June 1992, initiated a campaign to convince Washington that Iran was "a threat to the region and the world"—this, "not because [Iran] had become more antagonistic toward Israel but because all previous threats had more or less evaporated." Yet, several months *before* the election of this supposedly "alarmist" Labor government, Iran's client, Hizballah, had bombed the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, killing 29 and wounding 242. The direct complicity of the Iranian

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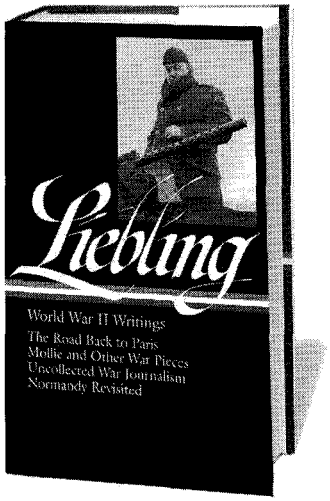

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regime in the bombing of the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires two years later would be confirmed by Argentinian courts.

In short, it is hardly the case that, as Parsi would have it, "Iran began to translate its anti-Israel rhetoric into operational policy" only after the September 1993 signing of the Oslo Accords. As early as 1987, the *New York Times* was reporting that Islamic fundamentalist groups in Lebanon, the West Bank, and Gaza were "inspired and sometimes financed by Iran." Nor is it true, as Parsi writes, that "it would still take a few more years" post-Oslo before Iran's "relations with Hamas began to thaw." In truth, Iran hosted Hamas as early as 1990, when it convened a "Conference in Support of the Palestinian Intifada," and Hamas went on to open an official office in Tehran the following year. By 1992, the PLO's Yasir Arafat was publicly accusing Hamas of serving Iranian interests and of receiving $30 million annually from the Islamic Republic. A 1989 State Department survey confirmed what was written in a declassified CIA report of the same year: "Iran is trying to assume a greater role in supporting violent Arab struggle against Israel."

These are the years to which Parsi blandly refers as Iran's cooling-off period.

This hardly exhausts the omissions and distortions with which *Treacherous Alliance* is replete, and which tellingly tend to concern Iran's most ideologically driven actions. Thus, there is not a word about the 1996 bombing of the U.S. military housing complex at Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia (for which Iran was deemed responsible by a U.S. federal court, and over which President Clinton briefly considered going to war against the Islamic Republic); barely a mention of Iran's many assassination campaigns against Kurds and other dissidents in Europe; and scarcely an allusion to Iran's relentless subversion of the Gulf monarchies, at a time when the warring Islamic Republic was on the verge of collapse.

A number of other, less significant omissions may result from simple negligence or ignorance. Parsi shows no evidence of having used Farsi or Hebrew-language sources, and he cites precious few government documents. He relies so heavily on interviews, many of them anonymous, that he refers to them even on matters of easily accessible public record.

And then there are the errors, far too numerous to list in their entirety. Parsi misidentifies ethnic groups, calling Lebanese Christians a "non-Arab minority," for instance; misstates the duration of Khomeini's exile from Iran, the date of Arafat's visit to Tehran, and the identity of the

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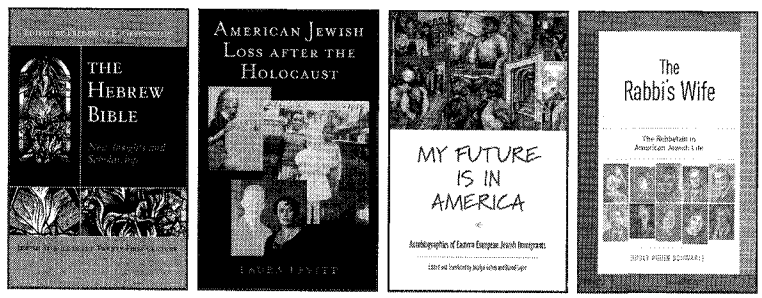

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Iranian prime minister whose government granted informal recognition to Israel in 1950; bungles titles and tenures; muddles major diplomatic events and garbles well-known episodes (a Bible inscribed by Reagan did *not* accompany Oliver North to Tehran, nor was the cake brought by his delegation shaped like a key, though a key was involved); perverts chronologies (Iran's nuclear program began to be restarted no later than 1987 and not, as Parsi claims, after the Gulf war); and so forth. The book is also riddled with misquotations and apparently fictitious quotations, not to mention minor and major distortions of quoted words. None of this inspires confidence in the accuracy of Parsi's interviews, by far his primary source.

GLARING AS all this is, at least as troubling is the litany of praise that has been heaped on this book by authorities in American foreign policy and Middle East studies. In a warm review in *Foreign Affairs*, L. Carl Brown of Princeton calls *Treacherous Alliance* a "well-constructed history." John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago has hailed it as "outstanding," "trenchant," and "dispassionate." Former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was on Parsi's dissertation committee, lauds it as "a penetrating, provocative, and very timely study," while Francis Fukuyama, his Ph.D. adviser, claims it "contributes both to our historical understanding and our current policy debate." In the *New York Review of Books*, Peter W. Galbraith, a former U.S. ambassador, has extolled it as a "wonderfully informative account."

Like Brzezinski and Mearsheimer, Parsi is an adherent of the realist school of international-relations theory. One of realism's central tenets, laid out by Parsi in the opening pages of *Treacherous Alliance*, is that the internal dynamics of states (i.e., their ideology, system of governance, ethnic makeup, class structure, and religion), while important, "have little or no impact on their respective foreign policies."

If that is in fact Parsi's working assumption, then he has neatly presupposed the answer to the question his book ostensibly set out to ask. As the head of a lobby promoting "greater understanding" of Iran, he may be merely doing his job. But the distinction between arriving at a conclusion and beginning with one is what separates the work of a historian from that of a lobbyist. In this case, it is a distinction that seems to be lost not only on him but on the luminaries who have lined up to endorse his defective scholarship and tendentious conclusions.

Righting the Ship

Comeback:
Conservatism That Can
Win Again

By David Frum

Doubleday. 224 pp. $24.95

Reviewed by
Dan DiSalvo

THE CONVENTIONAL wisdom now has it that conservatism as an intellectual and political movement is in crisis, its ideas outdated and confused, and its elected officials unable to govern. President Bush's unpopularity has given particular force to the last of these charges. Over the past year, a variety of polls have shown voters heavily favoring Democrats over Republicans. The public also expresses solid preferences for Democrats to handle almost every major policy issue, from taxes to terrorism.

To confront mounting Republican pessimism and challenge those who say that conservatism is exhausted, David Frum has written *Comeback: Conservatism That Can Win Again*. Frum, a former speechwriter for President Bush and an influential conservative intellectual, aims to provide both "a new generation of ideas" and—as the book jacket tells us—"hope" for conservatives. Although the Bush administration may have led the Republican party to "the brink of disaster," the future, he writes, hinges not on the deficiencies of one man's leadership but on the ability to propose effective solutions to the problems besetting America. To revive the party and the movement, he sets out to redefine what they stand for.

IN TWO short introductory chapters, Frum diagnoses what ails the patient. In his view, much of the trouble stems from the fact that conservatives voted for Bush in the belief that they would get Ronald Reagan redux, only to get Bill Clinton redux instead. In both foreign and domestic affairs, Bush, like his Democratic predecessor, has governed by means of a "triangulation" strategy. Abroad, the President promoted democracy in the Middle East while cultivating authoritarian countries (especially Pakistan and Saudi Arabia) to advance his aims. At home, he alternated between big-government policies on the one hand and free-market reforms on the other. These oscillations have left conservatives dazed and confused.

The cure to this disorientation, Frum argues, is *not* a more rigid or more "principled" conservatism. That would be "even more soundly rejected by the public," thereby effectively killing the patient. To make the point, he marshals a mountain of poll data showing that the preferences of American voters—on tax cuts, Medicare, education reform, stem-cell research, Social Security, and foreign policy—are at odds with those of many conservatives. If Republicans "continue repeating old formulas without adapting them to new times," they will lose.

DAN DISALVO *teaches politics at Amherst College.*

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To be sure, the task of adaptation is complicated by broad social trends, some of which make the GOP a victim of its own past successes. Crime, once a core Republican issue, has declined dramatically in the past fifteen years. Income-tax rates have been shaved to the point where there is not much more room to cut. Welfare has been reformed. Major industries have been deregulated. Thanks to these salutary changes, Frum concludes, the old Republican themes of lower taxes, smaller government, and traditional values are outmoded and no longer serviceable.

In their stead, he prescribes a strong dose of pragmatism. The bulk of his book elaborates a vision of a more matter-of-fact Republicanism, based upon specific policy initiatives in a range of areas—education, health care, retirement security, and immigration among them—that touch average Americans, especially the suburban middle class. This is the natural constituency on which he urges Republicans to refocus their attention, and all the more so since the Democrats are increasingly cultivating the urban "barbell" coalition of the well-to-do and the unwashed.

Getting down to particulars, Frum assails the Republican slogan of "No New Taxes," which he says has been translated in practice to mean "No New Thinking." In fact, he goes so far as to propose two *new* taxes: a consumption tax on the wealthy and a carbon tax on energy use, which he calls "green conservatism." The former is less controversial and has been endorsed by many economists, including Alan Greenspan. The latter, championed by Al Gore, is anathema to many Republicans. But Frum is careful to balance both of these new tax proposals with a call to Republican tax-cutters to continue working for a "rate of zero" for capital-gains, inheritance, and corporate taxes in order to foster saving and investment.

On another domestic front, Frum confronts social conservatives head-on by arguing that the pro-life movement has reached a point where not much more can be accomplished politically. With the country having arrived at something of a consensus in support of abortion that is safe, legal, and rare, the movement's most significant remaining task lies in the realm of moral suasion.

When he turns to foreign policy, Frum treads lightly. While lamenting the mistakes made in the conduct of the Iraq war, he does not challenge the decision to invade. Mainly, he expresses the hope that Republicans will become better at advancing their case for a forward-leaning American global posture. Abroad, he argues, more convincing rhetoric aimed at forging a con-

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The Tragic Cost When Religion Is Forced into the Public Square
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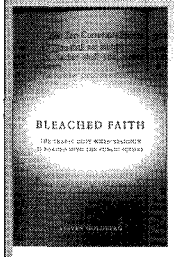

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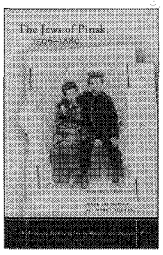

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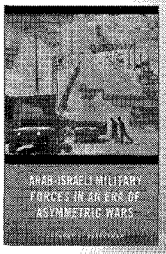

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sensus can be a force for regaining the country's international legitimacy and credibility.

THE CENTRAL contention in *Comeback* appears to be that the dire state of the Republican party requires the jettisoning of some core conservative principles. But is Frum overstating his own case? Many of the "new" policies he recommends, like a consumption tax or even a carbon tax, fit within the age-old Republican preference for market solutions to policy problems. Nor does Frum propose that social conservatives give up their quest to bolster traditional morality, but only that they proceed in a less antagonistic and more conciliatory way. In foreign affairs, his recommendations are hardly at odds with the fundamental direction of American policy under Bush and are also modest in the extreme. In brief, Frum's quarrel often seems to be less with Republican convictions than with Republican campaign slogans.

Indeed, even as Frum challenges a handful of long-held party positions, he adheres to a larger number of boilerplate GOP stances. To assist the middle class, he champions an extension of the No Child Left Behind Act along with charter schools and vouchers. On health care, he favors doing something market-oriented, although precisely what—apart from avoiding a "government takeover"—is never specified. For Social Security, he advocates a version of personal-investment accounts, a proposal that differs only in the details, if it differs at all, from what Bush tried and failed to pass. He also pushes tort reform, a reduction of agricultural subsidies, an end to racial preferences, a Constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, and an immigration policy that favors skilled over unskilled immigrants and provides more stringent checks on employers who hire illegal aliens. There are no surprises here.

Still, all that having been said, *Comeback* is more than the sum of its parts. Ultimately it makes a case for an energetic, government-oriented conservatism, one that is attentive to the bread-and-butter concerns of average Americans, that focuses more on post-industrial issues like the environment, and that undertakes campaigns of moral suasion to support the family. If such a program were adopted, it would indeed represent a move away from small-government Republicanism.

Whether such a shift is truly required, however, depends on whether the political seas ahead are as stormy for Republicans as Frum believes they will be. Yes, support for the GOP in the 2006 mid-term elections and in polls all last year was dismal. But does this represent a rejection of conservatism and an embrace of liberalism, or voters' short-term frustrations over the Iraq war, government scandals, immigration, and the Bush administration's failure to articulate its policies in a convincing way? Many surveys suggested that the leading Republican presidential candidates could be at least competitive with Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama. And while Republicans may not reclaim either the House or the Senate in 2008, they should remain within striking distance in 2010.

However one assesses the depth of Republican problems, David Frum's book is nothing if not timely. During the early primary season many of the GOP's presidential candidates were groping toward a policy agenda directed at the middle class, and *Comeback* makes a welcome contribution to the debate over how best to shape one. More generally, his plea that conservatives look to the future rather than resting on past successes is sage advice.

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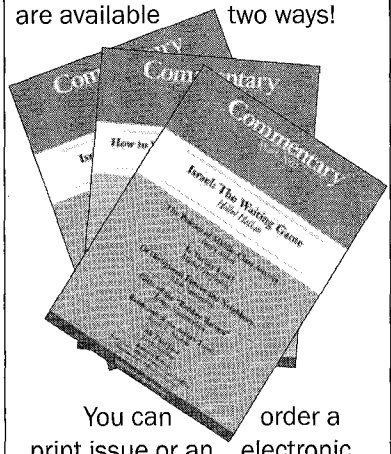

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The Global Bureaucrat

A Billion Lives:
An Eyewitness Report from the Frontlines of Humanity

by Jan Egeland

HarperCollins. 272 pp. $27.00

Reviewed by
George Russell

AS THE CHIEF administrator of the United Nations emergency-relief agency from the summer of 2003 to the end of 2006, Jan Egeland had a full plate. Mass murder in Darfur, the 2004 Asian tsunami, the fallout of Israel's 2006 war with Hizballah in Lebanon—these are just a few of the events he reflects upon in his memoir, *A Billion Lives*.

The role of Egeland's agency—whose formal name is the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian

GEORGE RUSSELL *is the executive editor of Fox News Channel.*

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Affairs (OCHA)—is to mobilize and coordinate civilian aid in the event of such natural or man-made calamities. The work is enormously important, largely unheralded, and often dispiriting. On average, OCHA responds to no fewer than fifteen major emergencies every year. Thus, the recollections of the man who directed it ought to tell us a great deal about the challenges of mobilizing the money, the rescue supplies, and the international will to mount rescues of tormented populations.

But anyone turning for that story to *A Billion Lives* will be disappointed. This is, instead, the epic story of *one* man, and of his battle, under the aegis of the United Nations, to save a suffering humanity despite the torpor, animus, and misplaced priorities of the world's wealthy and powerful—in other words, of the West and, especially, the United States.

Egeland's chosen stage was the press conference. Near the beginning of *A Billion Lives*, he recalls a 2006 trip to the town of Guiglo in the West African nation of Ivory Coast. There, a civil war had been raging for four years. United Nations peacekeepers had fled. Visiting a refugee camp, Egeland was confronted by a victim of the violence and rapine. In a grammar remarkably similar to Egeland's own, the refugee asks: "Do you realize that our destiny is in your hands? That tonight we will again be alone with no one to protect us and help us?"

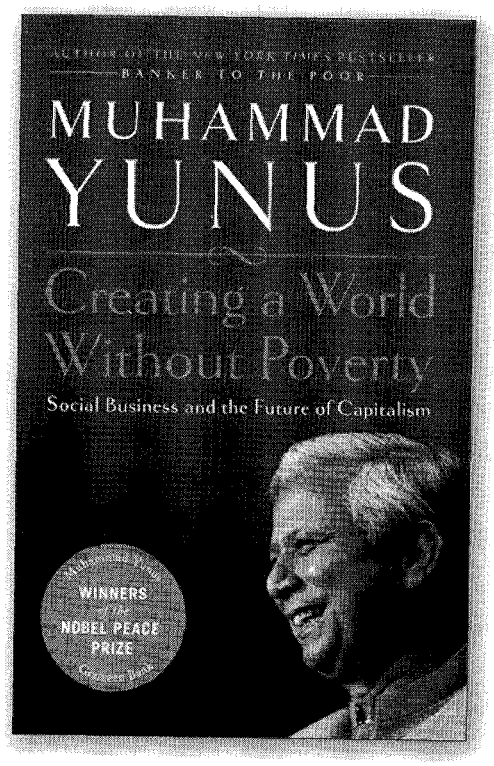
And Egeland responds: "The only promise I can make is that I will speak the uncensored truth about [your] plight to the powerful members of the UN Security Council next week." And so he does. And the Security Council, as he tells it, stirs itself to action (although it is not clear to what end). Meanwhile, far from passive himself, Egeland calls . . . a press conference, whose result, he writes entirely without irony, is that

> hundreds of millions all over the world will receive the message of the refugees in western Ivory Coast and hear who are accountable and why the member states must take action.

Time and again in *A Billion Lives*, Egeland stands spot-lit on the international stage, lecturing the less enlightened on the subject of their shortcomings. "We who witness the unmasked realities have a responsibility as never before to shake up and embarrass the powerful," he declaims. "Our only option is to speak the truth, always." When the camera light blinks on, he is never short of incendiary phrases about the derelictions of "the powerful."

At, for example, a press conference aimed at drumming up a massive amount of aid for victims of the

The Nobel Peace Prize-winner shares his new vision for ending poverty



"[Social business] marries the interests of corporations with economic development in a way that has never been tried before. . . . Yunus isn't calling for capitalism's abolition; he's calling for its enlightenment."
—Sheridan Prasso, *Fortune* magazine

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Asian tsunami, Egeland notoriously assailed certain rich nations of the West as "stingy." He claims here that his remark was taken out of context and was wrongly thought to have been directed at the United States, which at that point had committed only $4 million to tsunami aid. (The number would eventually balloon to $350 million in public funds, plus hundreds of millions more in private assistance.) But why would an international civil servant fling such an insult in the midst of appealing for donor assistance during an immense tragedy? Is reckless talk of this kind likely to concentrate public focus on the primary issue—that is, the need for aid—or rather to deflect it? As the excoriations pile up, one begins to suspect that the man uttering them is less a humanitarian than a showboat and a provocateur.

When, moreover, Egeland is not denouncing the alleged parsimony of the West, there is always Israel. Surveying the war damage in Beirut in August 2006, he responded to a BBC reporter's question by characterizing Israel's war operations thusly:

> This seems to be a disproportionate response to me. Of course I don't know whether there were any military targets here, but a disproportionate response by Israel is a violation of international humanitarian law.

Once again Egeland feigns dismay here that his wholly unsubstantiated charge, which he did not even bother to "balance" against the plain evidence of Hizballah's flouting of every canon of the international law of warfare, flashed around the world. But this time he adds coyly that "many are pleased that finally someone is 'speaking the truth from the UN side.'" A few weeks later, he reports with satisfaction, he repeated his performance by loudly condemning as "completely immoral" Israel's use of cluster bombs during the last stages of the Lebanon conflict—and was hailed for his boldness by his colleagues at UN headquarters:

> I am repeatedly approached in the cafeteria, elevator, and hallways by strangers who want to congratulate me that there "finally is someone telling the truth."

THAT IS: telling the truth, UN-style. Something other than your traditional humanitarian official, Egeland is rather to be understood as representing the new species of UN bureaucrat that came to the fore after the arrival of Kofi Annan as the organization's Secretary General in 1997. Annan was the UN's first global superstar: lionized by the Clinton administration, hailed by CNN, and capitalized by Ted Turner, who gave what was touted as $1 billion in Time Warner stock to Annan's newly created United Nations Foundation.

Under Annan's leadership, the UN would no longer define itself merely as a high-minded talk shop for conflict resolution and international service (except rhetorically, or when under criticism). Instead, it became a highly politicized congeries of funds, programs, and ostensibly decentralized agencies aggressively marketing global "peace and development" and busily branding skeptics and questioners as enemies of humanity, if not of the planet Earth.

In line with this makeover, the upper reaches of the new UN became peppered with aggressive national politicians and bureaucrats, of whom Egeland was one. As a precocious young man, he had chaired Norway's branch of Amnesty International before becoming head of the Norwegian Red Cross and, ultimately, secretary for humanitarian aid in the socialist government of

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You deserve a factual look at . . .

Peace in the Middle East (1)

Can it be achieved under the present circumstances?

After almost sixty years of the bizarre notion of not recognizing the "existence" of the State of Israel, after many years after the Oslo Accord "peace process", and after being offered unbelievably generous conditions to bring an end to the long and bloody conflict, the Palestinians have rejected those terms and have instead chosen to continue on their path of violence and confrontation. They have erupted in the bloody Al-Aksa Intifada, which so far has caused hundreds of dead and thousands of injured. The question can be raised whether peace with the Palestinians is possible at all.

What are the facts?

The Root of the Middle East Conflict. Many observers of the Middle East scene seem to believe that the root of the Middle East conflict lies in the dispute between the Palestinians and the Israeli Jews — that peace could come to the area if that conflict could be resolved. And the way it should be resolved, these observers believe, is by Israel's yielding its heartland, Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"), in addition to the already yielded Gaza Strip, for the creation of a Palestinian state and by returning the Golan Heights to Syria. But after the late Hafez Assad's brusque refusal to accept the return of the Golan (because it would not include the shores of the Sea of Galilee), and after the late and unlamented Arafat's contemptuous refusal of Ehud Barak's generous offer, it is clear that the Arabs do not want peace — they want confrontation and the destruction of Israel.

People also overlook that the conflict between Palestinian Arabs and Jews long predates Israel's control over the administered territories, that Arab-Arab wars are endemic in the area, and that Israel would be defenseless and at the mercy of its implacable enemies if it were to yield control of these strategic territories without a full peace — not just with the Palestinians, but with *all* the Arabs and Muslims.

The Menace of Islamic Fundamentalism. The clamor for yielding strategic territories to the Arabs is the first step in the immutable Arab attempt to liquidate Israel altogether. Because, certainly, Israel, with its fewer than 6 million inhabitants, compared to almost 300 million Arabs, and with its less than 10,000 square miles, compared to almost 5 million square miles of the Arab countries, cannot possibly be a threat to peace or a menace to the Arabs. And reducing the territory of Israel from 10,000 square miles to 7,000 square miles would not seem likely to bring peace one step closer. The main reason that real peace is so difficult to attain is the political and cultural context of the Middle East, which is dominated by the menace of Islamic fundamentalism. By the tenets of this fundamentalism, Israel's size is not of importance; it is the very existence of Israel that, to fundamentalist believers, is an intolerable offense, an unacceptable insult to Islam. The fundamentalist Muslims — Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and all the others — do not aim at peace with Israel or the recovery of some territory. Their publicly declared aim is the destruction of the Jewish State. On more than one occasion, the Islamic Jihad has stated: "[This is] irrevocable . . . We will be satisfied with nothing but the destruction of Israel."

> "Real peace . . . can only happen through a complete change of mentality, policies, and historical ambitions in the Muslim block."

Real Peace Must Be Global. The current upheavals in Israel, in its administered territories, and in the areas that Israel has transferred to the Palestinian Authority, may give the impression that peace would come to the region if Israel would come to terms with the aspirations of the Palestinians. But that is impossible, because the destruction of Israel — its disappearance from the map — is the stated purpose of the Palestinians, as embedded in their never-revoked Covenant. But even if it were achievable, peace would not come about, because such a peace would be a non-global one. The most fervent enemies of Israel — Iran, Syria, and including even Egypt (with which Israel is technically at peace) — have as their principal foreign policy goal the destruction of Israel, a goal that would not be altered even if Israel acceded to every wish of the Palestinians. Those Arab statesmen who have tried to come to terms with the Jewish State have invariably found a terrible end. King Abdullah of Transjordan was assassinated by the rejectionists, so was President Anwar Sadat of Egypt, and so was President Bashir Gemayel of Lebanon, all of whom envisioned peaceful cooperation and co-existence with Israel. Every Arab leader knows that any overt declaration of wishing to make real peace and to co-exist and to cooperate with Israel is a suicidal death sentence.

We all want peace, of course, especially the Israelis, who, five wars having been imposed on them, have been almost constantly embattled since the foundation of their state. But because of Arab-Islamic fundamentalism that cannot tolerate a Jewish presence on any part of "Arab territory." And because any peace arrived at would be non-global, such real peace would seem difficult or impossible to attain at this time. One hopes that real peace — the Arabs' acceptance of a Jewish State and peaceful co-existence and cooperation with it — will come eventually. But it can only happen through a complete change of mentality, policies and ambitions in the Muslim block, abandonment of fanatic fundamentalism, and change in governance from despotism to genuine democracy. And that may well take a very long time. In the meantime, Israel must keep up its guard and cannot afford — not even to please its friends, including the United States — to yield strategic territory, without which it would be mortally vulnerable.

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Gro Harlem Brundtland. After that government fell and Brundtland herself moved to head the World Health Organization, Egeland morphed into an international troubleshooter for Annan. Today, as the special envoy on climate change for Annan's successor, Ban Ki-Moon, Brundtland is the spearhead of yet another UN global crusade, while Egeland currently runs a think tank back in Norway.

Seen in this light, *A Billion Lives* is intended not just to provide an account for the ages of one man's experience but to serve as a long job application for some as yet unspecified senior position in the burgeoning global system that pivots on the United Nations the way the solar system pivots on the sun. As Egeland writes of that system with admirable frankness:

> At our disposal we now have the biggest and best network ever of like-minded intergovernmental, governmental, and nongovernmental organizations as channels of future investments in peace and development.

THE FACT Egeland points to here is an important one, and entirely circular. With the funds it raises, the United Nations feeds and waters the same array of non-governmental organizations that incessantly calls for still more money and authority to be allocated away from national governments and to the United Nations. In that sense, Egeland's chidings of the "stingy" West are to be seen not as the impassioned grandstanding of a humanitarian-in-a-hurry but as part of a much broader effort to cement the role of the UN as *the* channel for funneling public and private money to all manner of international causes.

Is this a good thing? In *A Billion Lives*, thinking back to 2004, Egeland recounts the worry he felt that an ad-hoc coalition of the United States, India, Japan, and Australia might end up competing with the UN as tsunami aid coordinators. He need not have worried. While Egeland thundered, and the UN's myriad committees and sub-organizations consulted on the fine points of aid "coordination," an armada of aid from the United States (which sent two dozen naval vessels, including the carrier *Abraham Lincoln*), Australia (32 vessels), Singapore, and Israel rushed to the scene, providing food, distilled water, blankets, medicine, and vital air logistics support. A full ten months passed before Egeland himself would visit the disaster region. He was busy coordinating.

Indeed, according to Egeland, his own most significant achievement in the tsunami crisis lay not in the saving of lives but in the establishment of a ten-year "framework" for global "disaster prevention"—all this being the fruit of a 168-nation follow-up conference whose resolutions are not, he adds, legally binding. In crowing about this and similar "achievements," Egeland occasionally tips his hat to a number of his fellow bureaucrats. But as for the ordinary aid workers who in this instance and countless others have selflessly taken the lead role whenever and wherever disaster strikes, they occupy hardly any place at all in *A Billion Lives*. But then again, they are not laboring to save the world; only to save people.

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Immoral Equivalence

Human Smoke:
The Beginnings of World War II, the End of Civilization

by Nicholson Baker

Simon & Schuster. 800 pp. $30.00

Reviewed by
David Pryce-Jones

A writer of some note, whose last book, *Checkpoint* (2004), was a novel debating the merits of assassinating George W. Bush, has now published a work characterizing Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Winston Churchill as warmongers and claiming that, thanks to them, Western civilization was lost.

This is a view with some history behind it: it was, at least in part, Hitler's view. But Nicholson Baker is one of those writers whose stock in trade is to shock, and that is what he has set out to do here.

Human Smoke is devoted to the paradoxical proposition that the Allies lost World War II by winning it. For Baker, Churchill and Roosevelt were just as bad then as Bush is now: foolish, small-minded cowards who ordered the bombing of innocent civilians from the air and so participated in a process of reciprocal killing, both blind and, worse, needless. The Allies' military victory was thus a moral defeat that compromised the civilization these leaders claimed to be upholding.

The book is a highly artful exercise: a scissors-and-paste compilation of extracts from well-known printed sources covering, in chronological order, the years leading up to the war and stopping at the end of December 1941, by which point the trial of strength between the opposing powers could only run its course.

David Pryce-Jones, *the British novelist and political analyst, is the author of, among other books,* Betrayal: France, the Arabs, and the Jews *(Encounter).*

In order to expose the "grain of events," as he puts it in an author's note, Baker presents materials from the contemporary newspapers as well as from "diaries, memos, memoirs, and public proclamations, each tied as much as possible to a particular date"—with, here and there, editorial signposting from Baker. We are given, for instance, snippets from the diaries of decision-makers like Joseph Goebbels, General Raymond E. Lee (the American air attaché in London), and Count Ciano (Mussolini's son-in-law) and of some who had to live with the consequences of those decisions: Victor Klemperer in Dresden, the Romanian writer Mihail Sebastian, Ulrich von Hassell, a participant in the 1944 plot to assassinate Hitler, and so forth.

But what does Baker do with these materials? Matthew Arnold once said that the historian Thomas Macaulay wrote in a style in which it was impossible to tell the truth. So it is with Nicholson Baker.

The writing of history requires context in which to assess the information provided. By treating history as though he were writing a novel, Baker is able to dispense with context and select solely whatever material he can find to substantiate his one predetermined conclusion: that the Allies were as bad as the Axis, and civilization was the loser. By this method, self-defense can be made to appear the same as attack, the resolve to fight one's enemies or even to give one's life for the freedom of others becomes no different from aggression, and the refusal to *resist* aggression becomes the highest form of bravery.

For Baker, the concept of a just war does not exist. Although his extracts do not deny that Hitler and the Japanese were aggressors, with ambitions to re-order as much of the globe as possible, they are marshaled so as to suggest that aggression should have been met with kindness and thereby turned aside. Thus, Baker digs out of obscurity a crew of Western loners and egoists, often rather innocent churchmen, who preached pacifism. Among them were Clarence Pickett, Professor Rufus Jones and the Quakers of the American Friends Service Committee, the Reverend Harry Fosdick, and Muriel Lester. Space is likewise allotted to a man named John Haynes Holmes, the author of an antiwar play in which an American President counters a surprise attack on the U.S. fleet by flying to Japan and touching the emotions of the Japanese people so deeply that they revolt against their native militarism, and "everything turns out fine."

Individuals who went to prison rather than be conscripted into the armed forces of the democracies are especially highlighted. In England, they included members of the Peace Pledge Union and Bloomsburyites around Frances Partridge. But none carried wartime pacifism to a higher extreme than Mohandas Gandhi in India, who is quoted often and admiringly in *Human Smoke*. His advice to the British was to fight Nazism without arms, even if the results were to prove suicidal.

Other public figures similarly advocated appeasement and accommodation, although not out of pacifist beliefs. They included Charles Lindbergh, Sir Oswald Mosley, General Antonescu in Romania, Pierre Laval in France—and Joseph Stalin. A single extract of eight lines offered by Baker makes Stalin out to be Hitler's passive victim. This is to falsify the entire Nazi-Soviet relationship of the period. In historical fact, the pact Stalin so gladly signed with Hitler in 1939 put paid not only to any possibility of peace but almost to Western democracy and the Soviet Union alike.

And then there are the villains. In the opening years of the war, Roosevelt was playing a secondary role. Baker's vignettes have been chosen to show him in a poor light—for example, loosely telling a Senate com-

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mittee that Hitler was a nut who imagined himself the reincarnation of Julius Caesar and Jesus. Among other senior American officials on display here are Harold Ickes and General Hap Arnold of the Army Air Corps, who were pressing for armaments and (like Churchill from London) doing their utmost to pull along a Roosevelt who might otherwise have saved the American national soul by listening to the Pickettts and the Fosdicks.

Early American measures like sending arms to China and imposing economic sanctions on Japan were—we are given to conclude—bound to provoke the Japanese to fight. So America is made to bear responsibility for Pearl Harbor. And the same goes all the more for Europe—the main theater at that time just as Churchill was the leading Allied protagonist.

After the Polish campaign and the fall of France, Hitler briefly held back in the belief that Britain would now accept his "peace" terms, according to which the British were to be allowed to keep their empire in return for granting the Nazis a free hand on the continent. But Churchill refused a deal that in the end could only leave British sovereignty and survival at the mercy of Nazi Germany, and so Hitler and Goebbels, disappointed and a little mystified, began preparations for invasion. When Churchill undertook the bombing of German targets to demonstrate that the British air force was fully operational and in a position to defend the country in the event of invasion, the Nazis were bound to retaliate in kind. What else could they do? Thus, in Baker's reconstruction, did Churchill bring the raids on Coventry and London on himself while also assuming primary responsibility for all subsequent bombings of cities and the death of civilians everywhere—just what Hitler and Goebbels themselves used to charge.

BAKER'S fictionalization of World War II depends not only on what he includes but on what he leaves out. In the grim early stages of the war, for instance, Britain's cabinet secretary informed Churchill that the German battleship *Bismarck* had been sunk with all hands; as they went down, they had sung *Deutschland über alles*. Churchill's eyes filled with tears and he said: "Such brave men to die in so foul a cause." Baker makes sure to omit any such evidence of Churchill's essential humanity because it would demolish the representation of him as a killer.

Another example: in a diary extract quoted by Baker, Lord Halifax, the then foreign minister, says that Churchill had talked "the most frightful rot" at a meeting of the cabinet. "It does drive me to despair," Halifax continues, "when he works himself into a passion of emotion when he ought to make his brain think and reason." What is missing here? Only that the evacuation from Dunkirk was then under way, and the prospect loomed of total British defeat—and that, in the midst of this make-or-break crisis, Halifax was urging peace talks with Hitler and had at the back of his mind a role for himself as the British Marshal Pétain.

The point of all this manipulation of history is of course to draw a line of moral equivalence between the Allies and the Axis. Baker dramatizes the point by presenting the two sides' supposedly analogous foul deeds on facing or sequential pages. Thus, fearing a Nazi invasion, the British are shown arresting local fascists and also rounding up some 11,000 Jews who were refugees from Germany and therefore suspected of being unreliable. Exactly one page later, we read a memorandum from Heinrich Himmler to the effect that European Jews will have to be deported to Africa or elsewhere. So injustice on the part of panicky British officials is equated with mass persecution.

Again: a preliminary British report about the state of research into an atom bomb raises the prospect of "concentrated destruction." On the very next page, a memorandum from a senior SS official to Adolf Eichmann asks "if it would not be more humane to finish off the Jews." So the Allies become no less bent on mass murder than their fascist enemies.

And again: in July 1941, the *New York Times* reports that the Greek people are facing famine and death because the British have commandeered their fishing boats. The very next extract conveys the instructions given by Reinhard Heydrich to special SS units for killing whole categories of civilians. So death as a result of war operations becomes the same as planned genocide.

IN AN interview a few years ago about his novel *Checkpoint*, Baker candidly emphasized the hatred he felt for the "foolish, small-minded, cowardly men" gathered in the Bush White House "who will not hesitate to order the bombing of civilians from several miles in the air." Even at this late stage of history, it appears, a stance of credulous and mindless pacifism can be trotted out whenever democracies act to defend themselves against totalitarian enemies determined to destroy them. But at least in World War II—despite the strenuous efforts of Baker's heroes—everything did turn out fine, because real heroes were prepared to make the sacrifice. Civilization did not come to an end but instead fought to live, and thereby lived to fight another day. The place of Churchill and Roosevelt in history is secure. The same will never be said about this mendacious book or its author.

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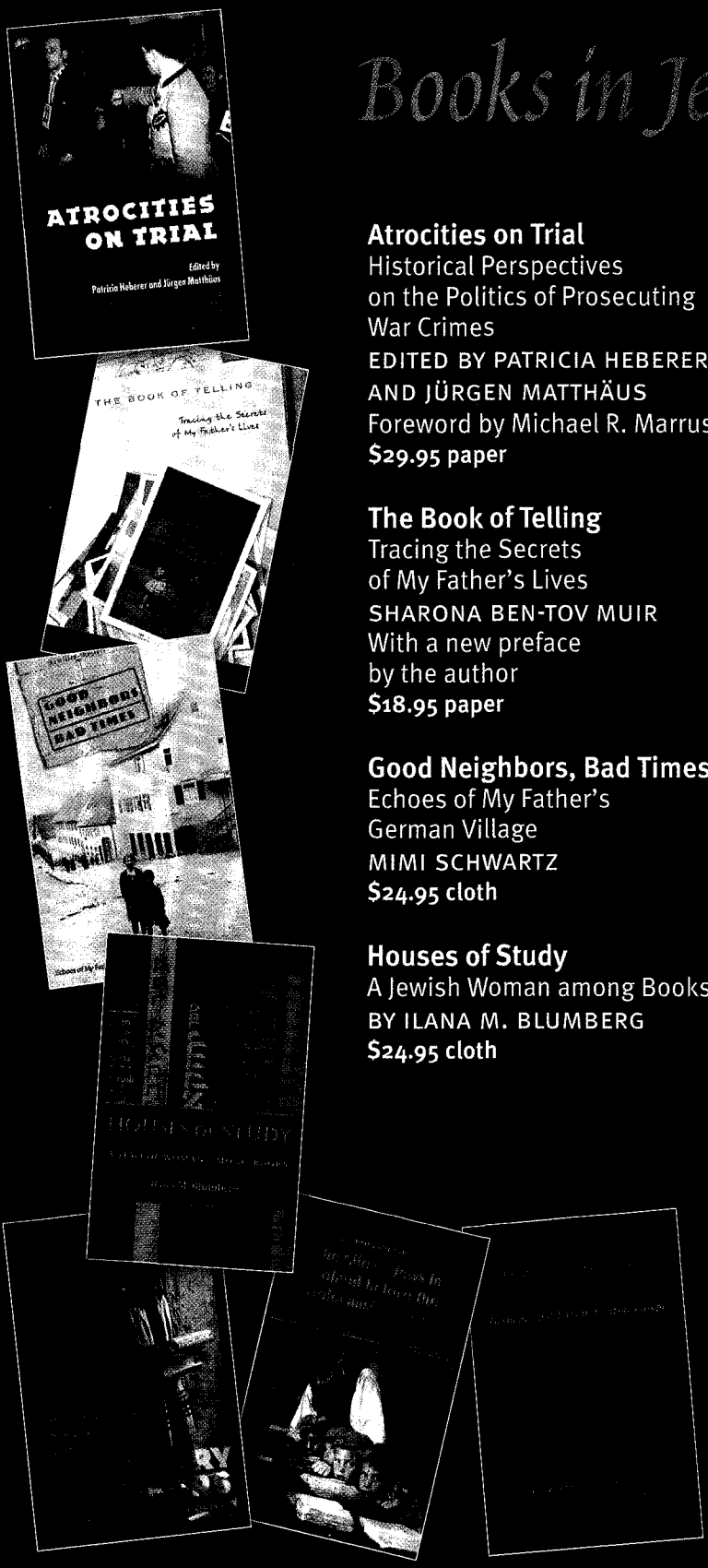
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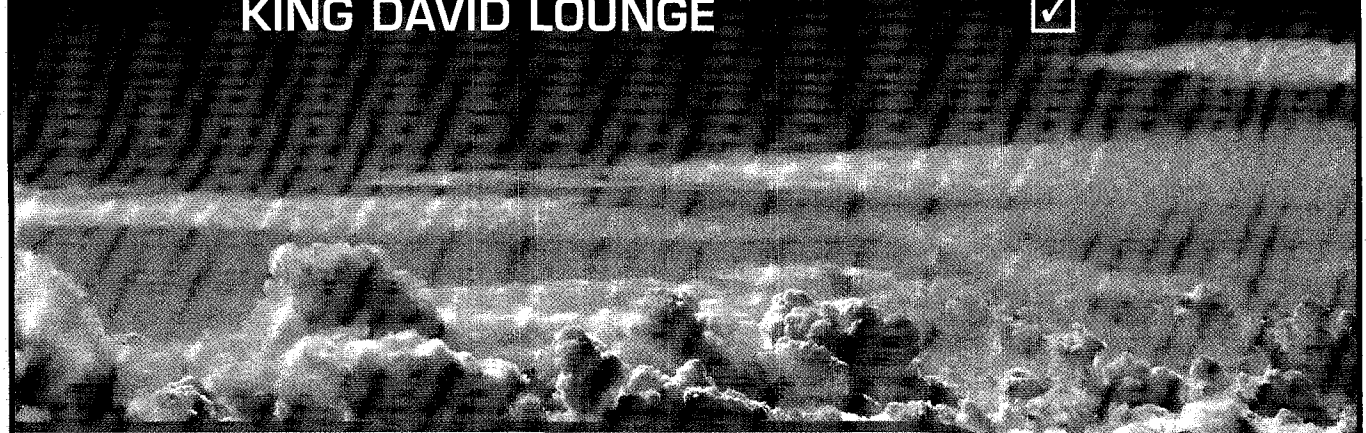

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